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LECTURES

ON

THE RELATIONS AND DUTIES

OF THE

MIDDLE AGED.

BY JOEL HARVEY LINSLEY,

PASTOR OF THE SOUTH CHURCH IN HARTFORD.



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.....
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ADVERTISEMENT.

These Lectures were originally prepared and preached for the benefit of the Middle Aged in this city. By complying with a request to publish them, the author hopes he may contribute something to promote the welfare of society, to advance the cause of human improvement and happiness, and through the *risen*, to subserve the true interests of the *rising generation*.

Those who heard the Lectures, will notice the *omission* of the one, on the 'duties of the middle aged, as members of civil society.' This Lecture, though properly belonging to the series, is suppressed, from a conviction that the copiousness, and increasing importance of some of the topics which it embraces, demand a more extended discussion. Should the author at a future period, be able to execute the plan which he has formed, the consideration of these topics, will occupy several additional Discourses, which will be published in a manner to correspond with the present volume. In the mean time, it has been deemed advisable to throw into the form of an Appendix, several brief extracts from the Lecture referred to, touching points of more than ordinary interest.

To those who are now engaged in the active scenes of life, this volume is affectionately and respectfully inscribed, with fervent prayer to God, that it may contribute to quicken and guide them in the discharge of their momentous duties.

Hartford, August, 1828.

CONTENTS.



LECTURE I.

<i>A general view of the Relations and Responsibilities of the Middle Aged.</i>	-	-	5
---	---	---	---

LECTURE II.—PART I.

<i>Duties of the Middle Aged, as Parents.</i>	27
---	----

LECTURE III.—PART II.

<i>Duties of the Middle Aged, as Parents.</i>	59
---	----

LECTURE IV.

<i>Duties of the Middle Aged, as Masters.</i>	101
---	-----

LECTURE V.

<i>Religion the Supreme Good.</i>	-	-	137
-----------------------------------	---	---	-----

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LECTURE I.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE RELATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MIDDLE AGED.

JOB xxix.

When the ear heard me, then it blessed me : and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me ; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me ; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor ; and the cause which I knew not I searched out.

If there is any thing consonant to the dignity of man's rational nature, or worthy of exciting in his bosom a generous ambition, it is the purpose, and the hope, of being useful to his fellow men. If there is any thing that can move a good man to desire the continuance of life, in the midst of its varied infirmities, vicissitudes, and trials, it is the privilege which is offered him, of aiding all the great interests of society—diffusing around him the blessings of social order, moral improvement,

and personal comfort and happiness. It is that in a world of violence and injustice, he may be the protector of the defenceless and the friend of the wronged—that in a world of corruption and abounding wickedness, he may be a pattern of integrity, uprightness and true piety; and that in a world of selfishness, and of suffering, unpitied and unrelieved, he may be the almoner of the divine bounty and a minister of mercy—becoming both in a temporal and spiritual sense, eyes to the blind and feet to the lame—making the heart of the widow and the orphan to sing for joy, and causing the blessing of many that were ready to perish to come upon him.

I have proposed, at this time, to address that class of my hearers, who may be described as *the middle aged*—particularly *middle aged men*.

I would be understood, however, to use this phraseology in such a sense, as to include in it all those, who, having passed the period of minority, and begun to act a part for themselves in the world—having assumed the relations and responsibilities of men of business, or members of domestic and social life, still continue in the active discharge of their various callings and duties. Under this construction, the term *middle aged*, will, in general, be found to embrace persons be-

tween the ages of twenty-five and sixty ; and to describe a large and most important, as well as a sufficiently distinct class of society.

As it regards the design of addressing several discourses more particularly to a single class of hearers, I would observe, that the propriety and expediency of doing so, has always been admitted ; but the principle has not, perhaps hitherto, been sufficiently acted upon. The pulpit has often uttered the language of counsel and warning to the young—while other classes, equally distinct, have rarely been separately addressed. But why should they not be thus addressed ? The middle aged, for example, not less than those in younger life, have peculiar engagements, peculiar duties and responsibilities, and of course peculiar dangers. Why then, should they not need special counsels, directions and cautions ? Besides, every one is aware how much the interest of the hearer is increased, by directness of appeal and closeness of application. The nearer the preacher can approach to a personal address, without violating the rules of decorum, the more likely he is to command attention, and make lasting impressions upon the mind.

I have placed at the head of this discourse Job's account of an interesting period of his life. It

appears to have been the period of middle age ; for in the context he speaks of himself as a parent ; and in the text he refers to the office which he held as a magistrate or judge among the people, and declares the vigilance and fidelity, with which he searched out and determined the causes which came before him ; and in general sets forth the active benevolence which marked the whole course of his conduct. It is not my design to take up this account, and expatiate upon its impressive delineation of character and influence. I merely set it before you as a beautiful portrait of that upright, diligent, useful—and I may add happy life, which every man ought to desire and aim to live. I hold it up as affording a fair illustration in example, of those general principles of conduct which I would enforce upon all who are yet in the midst of their days.

I now proceed, as proposed, to offer some remarks upon *the general relations and responsibilities of the middle aged*.

By presenting these, at one view, I shall hope to make a deeper impression on your minds, and prepare you for a more earnest and serious consideration of the suggestions which may, subsequently, be offered.

Suffer me then, for a moment, to draw your

attention, in the first place, to the *peculiar station you hold, and the important influence which you must, necessarily, exert in society.*

When we address the young, on the subject of their relations, duties, and responsibilities, we refer them not so much to what they now are, as to what they are soon to become. We point them to the time when they are to be the pillars of social order and happiness ; when all the great interests of man, both temporal and spiritual, are to rest upon them—and are to be either sustained by their integrity and piety, their wisdom and publick spirit, or are to be jeopardized—perhaps destroyed, through their ignorance, their weakness, or their corruption. It is from the elevated station which they are destined to occupy, and the mighty influence which they are one day to exert in the community, that we make our appeal to them, on the importance of the characters they are forming. We urge them, in view of the great interests that must speedily be entrusted to their guardian care, to lay broad foundations of character—to enlarge their stores of knowledge and practical wisdom—to imbibe sound moral principles—and thus prepare themselves to act well their parts in the various relations and offices of life.

If on the other hand, we address the aged, on their peculiar relation to general interests, we cannot speak to them as to those that now sustain, but only as to those that *once* sustained these interests. They have either already retired, or they are about to retire, from the more active scenes and weighty duties of life. If they have discharged these duties faithfully, we congratulate them—we honour them—and we love to acknowledge their claims to our gratitude, and to that of posterity. We still look to them for counsel ; and we urge them, still to hold up the light of their example before others, especially before those who are now forming their characters for future life. If their sun must at length set, we would fain see it set, unclouded ; and would watch to catch the last beams of its departing brightness.

But when we turn to *you*, my friends—to you who constitute the class of the *middle aged*, we address those who are now actively engaged in the duties, and are sharing in all the responsibilities of life. Our appeal is to those, in whose hands, and under whose control, are all the weighty concerns and mightiest moral influences of society ; who are bearing the ark of our civil and religious freedom ; and who are now deciding

what shall be the moral and social condition of our children and descendants through successive generations. The other classes of the community, naturally lean upon you. Their best hopes rest on the integrity of your principles, the wisdom of your counsels, and the consistency and benevolent energy of your conduct.

The truth of these remarks will more fully appear if you consider that the paramount interests of civil policy, general morality, and vital religion, are all committed to your charge.

From your body are drawn our legislators, magistrates, and ministers of justice. To you we look for suitable men to enact, to interpret, and to execute the laws. In these offices dwell the very life and soul of the body politic. The great interests of the social state, must be guarded and fostered by wise enactments. These must be administered equitably, yet firmly ; and the declared judgments of law and authority must be faithfully enforced. Laws are but a name, where there are not courage, and independence, and fidelity, on the part of the magistrate : But it depends upon you to say whether these noble virtues shall characterize the magistracy of the land, and make those who bear the insignia of office, the ministers of God for

good to the people ; or whether they shall be of an opposite character—theirselfes the servants of corruption, examples of immorality and disorganization, temporizers, double dealers, seekers of honour and emolument, and willing with the sword of authority, secretly to strike at those vital interests which they have sworn to defend.

But whatever may be the character of the magistracy ; or however zealous and faithful its efforts in sustaining the interests of morality and social order, little comparatively, will be effected, unless that class of men whom I address, afford an active and vigorous co-operation. The sacred authority and salutary agency of law, must be maintained and furthered, through your influence. You are able to exert an influence which is supreme and decisive. Whatever may be its moral character, or the direction which you may give it, its energy is irresistible. Nothing is so powerful as publick sentiment. It is all but omnipotent. Direct it against the laws, and they become at once a dead letter. Their majesty and authority are gone. Order, and righteousness, and peace, cease to send abroad their blessings ; and iniquity comes in like a flood. Let this influence be exerted to sustain the laws, to uphold the faithful magistrate, to discourage vice and

immorality, and the scene is reversed ; and your agency becomes as effective of good in the latter case, as it was of evil in the former. What a high and sacred responsibility does this difference of result devolve upon you ? What weight and importance does it attach to your characters, examples, and influence, individually—since it is from these that the aggregate of character and influence is made up.

I might here, also, advert to the press—that immeasurably active and powerful engine of political, moral, and religious influence. This engine is under your control. You direct its untiring energies ; and are far more than any other class accountable for the agency it is exerting over the minds, the hearts, and the eternal destinies of men. Contemplate for a moment the periodical press. Consider how it speaks, annually, quarterly, monthly, weekly, daily, with its ten thousand times ten thousand tongues, and pours its instructions into as many millions of immortal minds. What an incalculable amount of moral influence is here ! and what a responsibility to rest somewhere. But who are they that wield this influence ? Who supply the energies and resources of mind, demanded for such a work ? Not the young—not the aged. Neither are com-

petent to the task. It is the middle aged. *They* are the men who are serving this immense field of artillery, that is playing upon the world, and beating down the bulwarks of vice or virtue, according to the direction which is given to it. It is scarcely too much to say, that the press is the grand instrument of moving, and moulding the whole mass of human mind; and giving it that form, and impelling it to that point which those who wield it desire.

Would you shun responsibility, by saying that the number of those immediately employed in this work is small; and that upon them this responsibility must rest. But you are to bear in mind that the directors of the press, are always controlled by the censors of the press. In other words the press, as to its general voice and influence, is always governed by publick sentiment. It is conformed to the prevailing taste and feelings of its patrons. Now whose voice constitutes publick sentiment? Is it not, pre-eminently that of the middle aged? True, the young form a very large class of readers: but who direct the opinions and form the taste of the young? Are they not those who occupy every important relation toward them; and whose influence over them is direct and positive, from the earliest period of childhood up to mature years?

Further: I have alluded to the control which you exercise over the interests of religion. This is seen in various particulars; but especially in the fact that in all our congregations, you have the chief agency in designating those who are to minister at the altar, and in making provision for their support; and that the mass of active ministers must also belong to your body. They must be, for the most part, men in middle life. The pulpit then, is under your direction. You assign to it its character, and control its mighty influence to build up, or to prostrate the interests of pure religion. Upon the correctness of your faith, and the christian liberality of your views, the question must turn, whether a learned, able and pious ministry, shall render the sacred desk faithful to its high trust, and make it what God designed it to be—the handmaid of truth, and virtue, and piety; or whether an ignorant, feeble, graceless ministry shall depress, or betray these great interests—bring the glorious gospel of God our Saviour into contempt among men—and do more a thousand fold to poison, than to purify the fountains of moral and religious influence.

These general remarks may serve to exhibit, to some extent, the station which the middle aged occupy in society, the agency which they exert,

and the sovereign control which they exercise over all its graver and more important interests.

But, my brethren, I have one other view of the subject to present, which may place it in a still stronger light, and produce a still deeper impression of the responsibilities which grow out of your peculiar relations. I have barely alluded to your influence over the rising generation. I would now call your attention more particularly to the intimate relation which you sustain to this large and most interesting portion of the community. I would invite you to a serious consideration of that powerful, and almost resistless agency which you are daily exerting over the characters and future destinies of all classes of the young.

It is impossible to make too deep an impression on your minds, in reference to this subject. That tongue must be more than mortal that can adequately describe the importance of your influence, or the greatness and sacredness of your obligations.

When I address the middle aged (and here my remarks apply to both sexes) I address the great body of those who have children and youth under their care. I address parents, and guardians, and masters, and employers, and patrons. These are they who are moulding the minds,

and settling the principles, and forming the dispositions and habits of the young. They are unremittingly employed in conducting a process of discipline, which will speedily decide the character of those who are soon to stand in our places, and who will exert a controlling influence, not only upon their own generation, but upon the temporal and eternal destinies of unborn millions. Ministers may preach, sabbath school teachers, and all other teachers may labor, and the whole body of the pious and devout may pray, and they may exert a salutary, and by no means feeble instrumentality; and yet *your* influence taken in the aggregate must and will predominate. Let that influence, whether by precept or example, be disorganizing and corrupting, and while *they* save their thousands, *you* will destroy your ten thousands. Where an unprincipled and demoralizing agency is exerted upon a child for fourteen or fifteen years, while he remains under the parental roof; or where he spends this period destitute of those wholesome restraints of domestic government, which are seen to be so important in the business of education, we may, as a general rule, fearlessly assert that there is no redeeming influence, short of the special grace of God. A direction has been given to the mind:

and tempers and habits have been formed, which no human power or skill can remould and transform. If you add to these early years, those which comprise the season of apprenticeship or clerkship, and take in the whole period of minority, the case is much stronger, and the exceptions to the general rule will be found very rare.

These views are such as naturally present themselves to the mind, in contemplating the subject before us. They are indeed, general, yet they are manifestly, not unimportant, nor unworthy of the most serious consideration. Do they not shew you my respected friends, that your station in society is most responsible, and your duties most imperative and momentous?

The more I have contemplated this subject the more its importance has magnified. I have cast my eye over the various departments of human life, and seen all things full of labor—full of motion and activity. All the various powers, bodily and mental, of millions of immortal beings in daily and active exercise—intent on their different objects—pursuing them by different means, and controlled by an infinite variety of motives. I have looked at that complex machine—civil society, with its thousand wheels, and wheels within wheels, rolling forward to its

momentous results,—and I have inquired, whence all those powerful influences, by which, this life, and motion, and ceaseless activity are sustained? Who move those main-springs, by which the whole system is animated and kept in vigorous operation, and directed to its varied results? and I find all the principal agents and movers to be men in middle life.

Who are the men that sway the destinies of the nations at the present time? Who fill the highest offices and exert the widest influence in the different cabinets of government? Are they not the same class? Examine all the different departments of society—the different professions and callings from the highest to the lowest, and learn the chief sources of influence—and you will find ample illustrations of my subject. And the more you examine, the more you will be impressed with a sense of your important relations and great responsibilities.

If these remarks should avail to produce a just impression on your minds, and make you feel in any good measure the value of that station in society which you now occupy, as affording you the means of doing good, then suffer me to remind you that the period during which you can keep this station is exceedingly short. Your

present relation to the other portions of the community is, by this very circumstance, rendered doubly important both to yourselves, and to them. The aged have already passed the meridian of their days, and the period of their most active usefulness. If they have suffered this season to pass away without a wise improvement of its golden opportunities, they may weep over their loss, but retrieve it, they cannot. Right feelings may even now, spring up in their hearts, and they may have strong desires to redeem the time past of their lives; but alas! what can give to their purposes and decisions their former energy and promptness? what can restore to them their former ardour and resolution of mind, or their bodily vigor and capacity for spirited and persevering exertion? But I am permitted to address you, my friends, as those to whom God has hitherto spared these gifts and capabilities. You still occupy a commanding elevation in society. Yet important as is the ground upon which you stand, it is at best but a narrow isthmus; and is every moment growing still narrower. The whole life of man is as a shadow—a vapour that appeareth for a little season and then vanisheth away. What, then, must be said of the brevity of that particular

period which we have marked out? Besides, it should not be forgotten, that as individuals we have no right to calculate, that short as this period is, its full measure will be allotted to us. Making a fair estimate of life, it is far more probable that God will weaken our strength in the way—if he does not cut us off in the midst of our days.

Some of those whom I address, have moreover to reflect, that they have already arrived at the extreme limit of middle life; and more of us may call to mind that not a few of its best years have gone by, with perhaps little accomplished for the glory of God, and the good of our fellow men. Who among us, then, may not bring home to his soul the exhortation of inspired wisdom? What thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.

Nay my brethren, by so much as the period of active usefulness is shorter than the whole term of human life, by so much stronger motives are we urged to give all diligence to the duties of our several callings; and to make all our powers actively and steadily subservient to the great end of life—that of glorifying God and doing good to our fellow creatures. No truly benevolent man

liveth unto himself, and no such man dieth unto himself. He lives and dies for higher and nobler ends. Be ye, then, diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

In conclusion, I would say, let each individual whom I address, set before him all the varied relations which he sustains to others—to his family—to the youth under his care or influence—to society—to the cause of God—the cause of truth and righteousness. Let him consider how much his efforts are needed in sustaining and advancing the momentous interests, connected with these relations; and thus let him measure his responsibilities. Let him further inquire, how far, hitherto, he has met these responsibilities. The sense of past deficiencies in duty, should quicken his future efforts. He should adopt the noble resolution of redeeming the time, by exerting a better and more efficient influence, than he has hitherto exerted.

Above all things, my brethren, see to it that the precious years of active life be not so spent that the weight of your influence shall be thrown into the wrong scale; and instead of advancing, counteract and hinder the cause of God, of righteousness and human happiness. A just scrutiny upon this point, will demand of you a careful in-

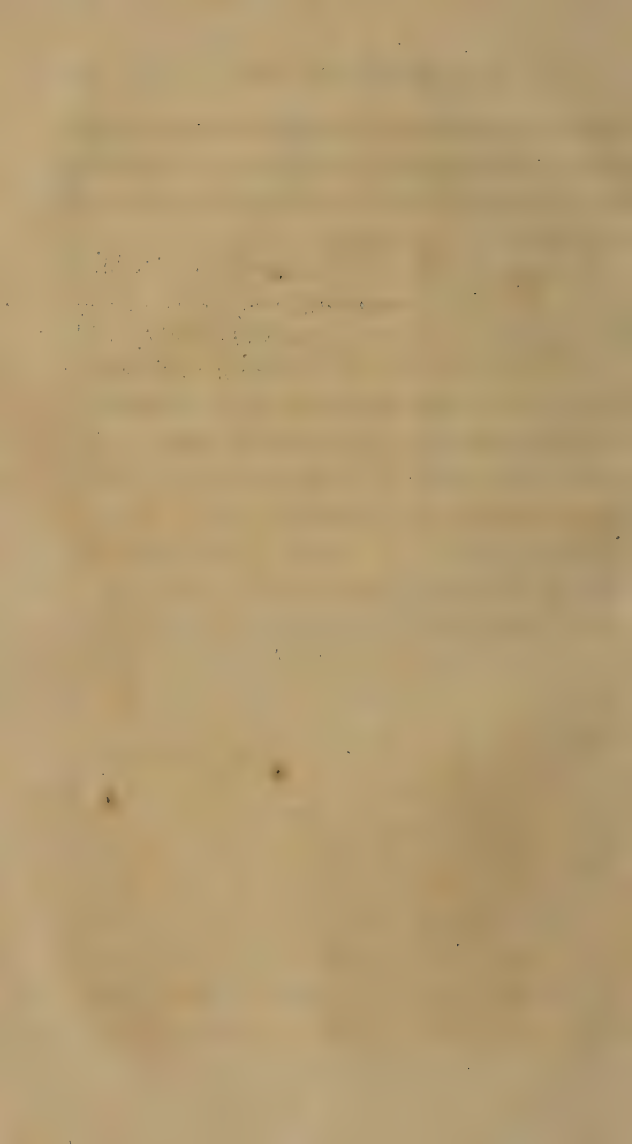
spection of all the relations you sustain, the business you pursue, the principles by which you regulate your business, the moral and religious sentiments which you disseminate, the habits you indulge, the customs and practices which you encourage, and in general, of all the various modes in which you employ your time, spend your property, and exert your influence. No man can live wisely, who refuses thus to think on his ways, and ponder the path of his feet, or who suffers selfish considerations to influence his judgment and warp his decisions. Many have madly and blindly pursued courses of business as well as of pleasure, which were not only ruinous to society, but in the end, to themselves, their families and to those who stood in other near relations to them. In these courses they have actively employed the best years of their lives, regarding nothing as too dear to sacrifice to their own pleasure and profit. They have acted the part of corrupters of the publick morals, have scattered around them the seeds of vice, disease and death—filled families and neighborhoods with the poison of their influence, and by ministering to the appetites and lusts of men, and prompting them to crime, have sent multitudes before them to the eternal world, not to welcome

them, when they fail, to everlasting habitations, but rather to receive them to the abodes of endless despair ; and yet while the bias of interest or the tide of passion bore sway, they refused to consider their ways. But alas ! what bitterness was there in the latter end ? What sources of keen remorse and self reproach were prepared against the days of age and sober reflection ? How were they to *undo*, or to control the mischiefs they had occasioned ? Could they purify the principles which they had corrupted ; or restore the virtuous habits which they had destroyed ? Could they empty the haunts of vice which they had filled ; or make the husband and the father happy at the fire side, whom they had taught to seek his enjoyment at the gaming table, or amid the resorts and the revels of intemperance ?* No—those who have spent the prime of life in the manner described—spent it in fostering and extending, rather than repressing vice and crime, must reap as they have sown. The evening of their days must (if they are not lost to every right feeling).

* The venders of ardent spirits are not here particularly referred to ; but certainly it becomes them to consider how far the evils described, do, in fact, result from this traffic : and whether if persevered in, after all the light that is now thrown upon its character and effects, it will not be a source of bitter reflection another day.

bring with it a thousand unavailing regrets ; and memory and conscience will conspire to pierce the soul through and through, as with stings of scorpions.

These my friends are the general views which I have wished to present for your consideration. My hope is, as already suggested, that they will serve to impress upon your minds the importance of your duties and obligations, and thus awaken a livelier interest in that course of discussion, by which, these duties and obligations are to be further illustrated and enforced.



LECTURE II.

PART I.

DUTIES OF THE MIDDLE AGED, AS PARENTS.

PROVERBS, iv. 3, 4, 5.

I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, let thine heart retain my words—keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom; get understanding, forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth.

PROVERBS, xix. 2.

That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.

IN my first discourse to the middle aged, I directed their attention to their peculiar relations and responsibilities, generally—without attempting, particularly to discuss, and enforce the duties resulting from these relations. That general view was designed as introductory to something more specific. In accordance with this design, I now invite your attention, to that deeply interesting class of duties which belong to you as pa-

rents—especially to that class which respects your children in early years. I shall, of course, be understood to include in my remarks all those who stand in the place of parents, though they may not, in the literal sense, bear this relation.

The passages of scripture quoted at the head of this lecture, are at least sufficient to shew that the great business of imparting to our children knowledge, understanding, and sound wisdom, and thus training them for duty and usefulness, was not disregarded by God, when he prepared for man, the gift of his holy word. The scriptures do not, it is true, enter minutely into the particulars of parental duty ; but from a careful examination of their precepts and examples, you may gather the most important general principles, and be otherwise greatly aided and encouraged in the discharge of your high responsibilities.

And here I cannot forbear pausing to ask you, hearer, whether you are sure, that you ever yet felt any just sense of these responsibilities ? Have you ever soberly considered the momentous nature of that relation, which was constituted at the moment, when it was first said, you are a parent ? or ever computed the value of that treasure with which God entrusted you, when he committed to your care, and subjected to your

influence, a rational, accountable, and immortal spirit? True, at the first, you saw life only in its incipient state. There appeared little else, but a feeble animal existence; but O, what an unspeakably precious treasure was hidden in that frail form! There lay folded up in embryo existence, all the capacities and energies of a soul that never dies. There was a mind capable of grasping heaven and earth in its span, of sending its thoughts through eternity—of making, under proper directions and influences, rapid and endless progress in knowledge and holiness, and thereby of emulating the purity and sharing the joys of angels. Parents, such is the treasure that is committed to your guardian care. These are the powers that are subjected to your discipline and control. Your responsibility arises not from the mere fact, that your children possess these noble endowments—these immortal powers; but from the connected fact of your plastic and controlling influence over them. To that influence bounds can scarcely be set: It is all but omnipotent. No human power can effectually resist it; and if it be a bad influence, even divine grace, though it may counteract its most injurious effects, will never, in this world, completely deliver the soul from its pernicious agency.

Do any of you imagine that I overrate parental responsibility, by attributing undue force to parental discipline, and early moral and mental culture? Then look abroad over the various savage tribes, whether of the east or the west, and compare the best specimens of our nature, as there exhibited, with the fairest examples of the same nature as they are seen in civilized and christianized countries, and tell me whence arises the wide—I had almost said infinite difference. While the mind of the savage, neglected and uncultivated, scarcely raises him above the level of the beasts that perish, “insensible to all the wonders of creation and excluded from all the treasures of nature,” the more favored member of enlightened society whose capacities are strengthened and expanded by education, “comprehends within the ample range of his intelligence the Universe of God. All the beauties and glories of Jehovah’s works are unveiled before him. Nature unlocks to him her stores and reveals the secret laws of her mysterious operations; the powers of the lower orders of animals are subjected to his control, and the faculties and attainments of his fellow men are made subservient to his profit and his happiness.”* It is un-

* Edinburgh Encyclopedia, Art. Education.

necessary to dwell on other features of this contrast, some of which, and particularly those which relate to moral habits and religious views, are at least equally striking : still it may be confidently asked whether any person familiar with illustrations like these—illustrations which the history of our race abundantly supplies, can doubt for a moment, the transcendant influence of education over all the powers of man ? And if any thing were wanting to deepen our impression on this subject ; or if we chose to contemplate it in a nearer view, we should have only to cast our eye over our own city or neighborhood, and we might see varieties of character, both intellectual and moral, scarcely less striking, and evidently resulting from the operation of the same general cause—namely difference of education.

The question of parental responsibility, then, is set at rest. The reality of that responsibility no reflecting parent will deny ; and its magnitude, we may rest assured, we shall never over-rate.

Proceeding under the influence of these general views—which will be further illustrated as we advance,—I now invite your attention to the subject of *early education*.

I cannot forbear stating the embarrassment I

feel in undertaking to discuss so extensive a topic, within the narrow limits, to which, I have deemed it necessary to restrict myself: at the same time it does not appear a sufficient reason for attempting nothing, in a concern of such deep interest, merely because we cannot effect all that seems desirable. The only thing aimed at on the present occasion, will be the establishment of a few general principles, and the communication of such hints to parents as may lead them to further inquiry, and thus advance them in the knowledge of their duties.

Suffer me then to observe, in the outset, that it is of great importance that you entertain just views of your children; in other words that you consider, and justly estimate their varied powers, the relations which they are destined to sustain, and the duties which must sooner or later devolve upon them. You should form correct views on these points, from the first moment you are called to bear the parental relation; and they should influence your conduct at every subsequent period.

Look at your children. They inherit your nature, and you may learn *their* wants by justly estimating your *own*. They are *animal* beings; and as such, you are bound to provide for their

necessities. You are to use all proper efforts to supply them with suitable food, cloathing, and whatever else, of this sort, may be necessary to their health and comfort. They are *rational beings*, and therefore it is your duty to furnish them with the requisite opportunities and facilities for the cultivation of their minds—for the improvement of those noble intellectual faculties with which their Creator has endowed them. But this is not all; they are *moral, accountable and immortal beings*; and as such, they have most important and responsible parts to act in the world. They are, therefore, to be trained to act these parts *well*. They are to be trained for duty, and usefulness, and thereby, for happiness here, and they should be taught to seek by patient continuance in well doing, for glory, and honor, and eternal life hereafter.

In regard to the first part of the human constitution, above named—the *animal nature*, we know that there is a strong and general disposition, in a comparative view, to overvalue it, and to lavish upon the body an undue portion of our cares and anxieties; and yet no inconsiderable portion of these cares and anxieties it really demands. The burden of the evil, lies not so much in their employment, as in their misdirec-

tion. They are employed to wrong ends. We often see parents bestowing their cares, and using their exertions both with regard to themselves and their children, not merely to provide what temperance requires, but what luxury and sensuality demand; not what will satisfy, but what will pamper the animal appetites. Great pains and expense also, are employed to adorn the body; but for what end?—not merely for comfort, not merely that a becoming decency may grace the exterior, but for the low and unworthy purposes of vanity and display—to gratify the lust of the eye and the pride of life. The body is not, in this case, regarded in its true light. It is not, according to the dictates of divine wisdom, looked upon as the mere encasement of the soul—the depository of its high immortal powers, and cherished chiefly with reference to this important relation; but its interests are pursued as distinct and paramount interests. Not that I would despise the delights of sense. So far as they may be enjoyed within the limits of temperance, I would participate in them with gratitude; but as these delights were never designed to constitute our *chief good*, so they ought never to be pursued as our *chief end*.

The principle I would inculcate then, is, that

the bodies of our children, in all the care which we bestow upon them, ought habitually to be viewed and prized, with supreme regard to their intellectual and moral powers. Our children should be made to see, and feel, that we entertain this view, and mean to act accordingly. The effect of placing the animal nature of man in this just light, is not, as some might be ready to imagine, to render him careless of its wants, or indifferent to its health, perfection and enjoyment. It merely alters the direction, and moderates the excess of his cares on these accounts. So far is the body in this view from being liable to *neglect*, that it is never duly estimated and seldom properly treated under any other view: and this for the plain reason, that it is not regarded in conformity to its original design, or disciplined and cherished in subserviency to its most important end.

We know from experience, as one has justly remarked, how much the vigor of our mental powers depends upon the state of our corporeal frame; and how much our thoughts and feelings may be influenced—how materially even our moral and intellectual character, may be affected by the external organs of the mind, and by the firmness or delicacy of our muscular and nervous

system. "The culture of the corporeal powers therefore considered as the instruments of the mental faculties is entitled to the anxious attention of all who have the charge of a human being: and it is in the period of infancy that such attention is most important, because it is then the most efficacious."

These remarks appear to me worthy of very serious consideration, particularly on the part of mothers, to whose care whether skilful or unskilful the tender organs of the infant child must be chiefly entrusted. Through luxury, intemperance and vice, and occasionally from less blameable causes, a feeble constitution is often entailed; but it cannot be disguised, that in many instances, such a constitution with all the protracted suffering connected with it, is entirely the result of that ignorance and mismanagement which are not seldom seen to preside over the nursery department, and control the frail and flexible powers of infancy. Nay if I were to go further, and assert that infant life is, in numerous cases, cut off, through the operation of the same causes, the experienced practitioner would lend his testimony to sustain me in the position.

Without attempting, then, to lay down any rules for the conduct of *physical education*,

which would better become another profession, I must be allowed to say, and that under a sense too, of its high importance, that this subject demands more attention than most parents have hitherto given it. The health, and comfort, and improvement, and usefulness, and even life itself, of their children, demand it. Many mothers do not suitably estimate their duties and responsibilities on this point, not because their hearts are devoid of tenderness, or insensible to the welfare of their children (for blessed be God we have not yet arrived at that state of society, in which the enchantments of pleasure have converted mothers into monsters, and hardened them like the ostrich of the desert against the cries of their own offspring) but because they are not sufficiently aware of the delicacy and difficulty of the duties that devolve upon them. They do not justly estimate the difference of result, between skilful and unskilful management, in regard to the health and perfection of the bodily organs, and through them, of all the higher and nobler powers of the soul.—The well instructed skill of a mother, has preserved and given to the world many a useful life, which would otherwise have been extinguished, while ignorance and heedless inexperience have doubtless sacrificed a still greater number, who might otherwise have been saved.

I must then be permitted to say, in concluding my remarks upon this point, that no mother ought to regard herself as qualified to discharge these humblest duties of her responsible relation, until she has obtained all the knowledge, and acquired all the skill, of which, through the aid of proper books, or by other means, she can, consistently, avail herself. It ought to be one of her first objects, to study the subject of physical education, that it may not be her fault, if her children do not possess *sound minds, in sound bodies*.

I now pass to the subject of education in the more popular sense of this term—regarding it, however, as “comprehending every thing, whether systematic or accidental, which has any influence either in developing or biasing the powers of the mind, and the tendencies of the heart.”

What, then, is the proper object of systematic education? Unquestionably it is to cultivate the intellectual and moral powers, *with a view to some specific and useful result*. To promote the true excellence of the individual—to render him alike a blessing to himself and to the community—to train him to just and enlarged views of his relations and responsibilities as an accountable being; and to accustom him to aspire by the faithful discharge of all his duties, private, social, and

religious, after real honor and enjoyment in the life that now is, and immortal blessedness in that which is to come—these, as you have already been reminded, are the true ends of education : and these ends ought to be kept constantly in view, in the education of *all*, whatever rank they may occupy, or whatever stations they may be destined to fill.

As to the particular course of education, it may be variously diversified, in order to adapt it to the particular spheres and pursuits of different individuals ; but the general design to which we have alluded, ought never in any case to be lost sight of. If we are correct in these views, then it may fairly be inferred, and may be laid down as an important principle, “ that education is good or bad, proper or improper, complete or deficient, as the end which it proposes is laudable or reprehensible, as the course of discipline is more or less conducive to that end, and as the means employed are adequate or inadequate to its accomplishment.”

Now suffer me to enquire of parents, why, in a country where good and suitable means of intellectual cultivation might, by a little enterprize, be so easily furnished, at least to the mass of children—the tone of general education is still so low !

And why do we find among the midling classes of society, so few persons, blessed with early and thorough discipline in those branches of knowledge, which pre-eminently expand and liberalize the mind, and which conduce so much to respectability, usefulness, and augmented enjoyment?

When I speak of the low tone of education, I do not speak thus, in a comparison of this community, with that of any foreign country. Such a comparison I am aware would be in our favor; but I speak of education as *it is*, when compared with what it *might be, and ought to be*. In this view, the fact is as here assumed; and I inquire after the causes of so serious an evil.

As the result of my reflections upon this subject, I would observe, that the evil may in part be attributed to the low and defective views which many parents take of the general design of education. They mark out for their children, too narrow a sphere. They do not seem, at all to contemplate some of the most important relations which they will be called on to sustain; or suitably estimate the influence which they might be made capable of exerting.

It cannot be denied for example, that it has been a very common sentiment among parents,

who have destined their sons to the pursuits of husbandry, or to the practice of the mechanic arts, that no more intellectual education was to be *desired*, than was just sufficient to guide them through the routine of their labors, and enable them to transact the business naturally connected with their calling. For this purpose, they must be able to read, to write, and to practice the common rules of arithmetic. And this is the sum of that intellectual cultivation and improvement which the condition and responsibilities of a rational and accountable being have been thought to demand.

Now must there not be some great error here? and one too, fraught with practical evil? Do these parents take broad and just views of life, with its varied duties? Your son is well instructed in his trade or calling. He is skilful in it, and knows perhaps how to render it profitable. He may accumulate wealth. So far is well; but is this all, or even the chief, for which he is to *live*? Would you confine his views to this low, narrow, selfish sphere, and teach him to aspire to nothing more noble than the exercise of this handicraft skill, and this capacity to provide for his bodily wants, or at most to heap up a little glittering dust? This is to treat him as a mere animal; to

exclude from your view, and not less from his, all idea of his character as a social being, and an accountable creature of God. It is to make *self* the centre of his affections and cares—teaching him to move in a narrow and confined orbit, and exert a very limited influence; and rendering his enjoyments few, and those chiefly of the lowest kind.

But what, it may be asked—would you have every parent, whatever may be his rank in life, or the talents of his son, educate him with a view to the highest sphere, and indulge the vain expectation that he may one day fill the most responsible offices in the government? No: I would not have him train him with any direct view to such elevation; but I would have him remember that for aught he knows, his son, however humble his present condition, may one day reach that elevation. Examples are not wanting in our history, to shew that this is at least possible. Not a few, have, from the lowest sphere, risen by the force of genius, and by persevering diligence, to the most honorable posts of influence and usefulness.

But suppose the event to be otherwise. Suppose your son is never to attain to any official dignity, and there is not the least reason to anticipate it; yet does this alter the propriety of your

exerting yourself to make him every way *worthy* of such dignity? And in proportion as he shall approach this character, will not his usefulness in private life be augmented?

Because your son is not to be President, or Chief Justice of these States, is it therefore matter of indifference whether he be a wise man or a fool? whether he be with, or without character and influence? and whether this character and influence be good or bad? If he is not to be a magistrate, yet is he not to be a parent, a master, and a member of society? If he is not to attain to the dignity of office, yet is he not destined to enjoy—I had almost said the higher dignity of a citizen? Is he not to exercise the elective franchise, and to contribute his full share to give character to the government? And let me ask you, will not the character and influence of our government, in the next generation, very accurately accord with the intellectual and moral character, which parents of this generation, shall instamp upon their children?*

* The argument here urged, might be still further enforced. The attentive observer must have noticed, that the concerns of almost every community are directed by a few individuals. This is the fact in regard, both to civil and ecclesiastical societies. In our own land, and under our free institutions, this holds pre-eminently true.

Never, in any other country, has there existed a state of society

I say, then, brethren, there has been utterly a fault among parents. It has been a common error among them to take defective views of the future relations and obligations of their children ; and by mistaking or lowering the true end of education, to undervalue its importance. They have too little regarded the dignity and happiness of their children, as intellectual and thinking beings ; and far too little their general influence and usefulness in society. Ought not every parent to desire, and aim, to make his children, when they come forward into the world, extensively respected in the community ? Ought he not to do all in his power to give weight to their influence, as well as to render this influence of the most salutary kind ? And will not that young man come

so favorable to the proper influence of each individual member—never one, in which, every man had so fair an opportunity of ultimately gaining that station and exercising that control, to which, his talents and general character fairly entitled him. If any individual has uncommon abilities, and a capacity to sway other minds, his influence is at once felt, in the place where he lives. Municipal offices are assigned him : His influence increases ; and he is soon transferred to the Legislature of his State. If to judgment and integrity, he add general information, and a capacity to deliver his sentiments with propriety in publick debate, what post of honor and usefulness in the land is not open to him ? If he does not ultimately find a seat in the National Congress, it certainly will not be because he has not at least as fair claim to this distinction as many who now enjoy it.

forward into life with the best prospects, and other things being equal, exert the best influence, whose intellectual and moral powers have been the most cultivated ; whose mind has been stored with general knowledge ; and who, from his earliest years, has been taught to live not merely for himself, but under an enlarged view of his various relations, to prepare himself to act a noble and useful part in the world ? Surely there is no room for doubt or debate upon this point.

I cannot stop here to answer the absurd objection, not unfrequently made, that some parents who have taken more than ordinary pains to give their children a good education, have lived to see them neglect or abuse the advantages it offered, and sink to a low rank in society ; while other parents who allowed their children few opportunities for improvement, have seen them rise above all their disadvantages, and become respectable and useful in the community. So far as this objection has any force, it goes to shew that it is useless to do any thing for the education of our children. It is a vain thing to train them up in the way they should go. It were better to suffer them to come up in their *own way*—to grow up untutored as the savage that roams the wilderness. To be consistent,

and carry out the principle, the objector should take no pains to give his son skill in any trade or mechanic art—certainly no extraordinary pains ; for how does he know but he may neglect through idleness, to use his skill, or through vice and extravagance, may abuse it ; and thus in point of character, and usefulness to his family, and to society, fall far below those who had no such advantages ? But who adopts this absurd principle in fitting his children for any of the ordinary callings of life ?

Every parent knows that his children may misimprove their advantages, whether they be greater or less ; but he ought at the same time to know, that if their minds are cultivated and improved ; if they are taught to respect themselves, and to seek their support and their happiness in those pursuits which will ensure them the respect of others, there is, comparatively, little danger that they will disappoint his reasonable expectations. Nothing is plainer than that the less the mind is improved, and the fewer the intellectual enjoyments which are furnished, the lower will the estimate of character be, and the stronger the temptation to seek base indulgences, and rest satisfied with mere animal pleasures. And hence it has been long a settled principle, that ignorance is the friend and natural ally of vice.

There is another objection, somewhat more specious, which some parents may feel, against the plan of raising the general tone of early intellectual education. The parent may say, I have no thoughts of training my son for a scholar; nor for any of the learned professions: I have studied his character, his taste, and talents—have considered my pecuniary circumstances, and have resolved what I ought to do. I design that he shall be a farmer, or a mechanic, or a merchant—he is to be a man of business. Now if I adopt your suggestion, and with a view to his increased respectability and general influence, give him the best advantages for education in my power, consistently with his obtaining the proper skill for his particular trade or calling, will not what I gain for him in this way, be more than lost in another? In aiming to raise his character as a scholar and a man of information, shall I not destroy his relish for laborious employments, and spoil him for a man of business? I acknowledge the question, here raised, is one of importance; and if there were a single doubt on which side the truth lay, I confess the objection it presents would be most weighty. But happily for our children, and for the cause of intellectual improvement, the danger here apprehended, is altogether

imaginary. This is a point no longer left for speculation : facts have settled it beyond all further controversy. I am not, you will observe, claiming for young men, destined to the ordinary callings of life, to which allusion has been made, a college education. Without doubt this would, as a general rule, be equally inexpedient and impracticable. A course of studies so extensive, demanding so much time, and occupying those very years, when business skill and business habits are to be acquired, would unquestionably, interfere with the plan of life, supposed to be marked out. But I propose no such course ; nor is it at all necessary to the object in view.

In the plan of intellectual education which I would recommend, I would by no means encroach upon the time necessary to acquire a competent share of knowledge and skill, in the particular branch of business, designed to be pursued—fully aware, that short seasons of apprenticeship have been too common, and have proved a great evil. I would leave for this object, from five to seven years, according to the circumstances of the parent, or the difficulty of the trade ; and if a youth cannot be made to love, and cheerfully pursue his destined employment by this course of discipline, his employment is either not wisely cho-

sen, and adapted to the natural bent of his inclinations, or there is a serious defect in his character, which ought to have been counteracted, and if possible removed, by early moral culture. There are cases, I am aware, where lads, who have access to books, early discover such a predilection for study, as unfits them for other pursuits; and doubtless in these cases, the more their taste is indulged, the more fixed it will become; but ought a parent, in any case to think it a misfortune, that he has, by whatever combination of circumstances, been able to detect the true bent of his child's inclinations? If he has a passion for books and study, too strong to be controlled, it is a fact most important to be known. If that passion cannot be checked without violence, let it be indulged. Give your child every advantage in your power; and if his improvement correspond, as doubtless it will, with the strength of his inclination, let him proceed in his chosen course. Resist, and you will probably ruin him. If you are not able to give him a liberal education, do what you can, and his zeal and perseverance will supply the rest. I say this, not in reference to the mere whim or freak of a child, but to the real, and ascertained bent of his mind.

Is there then, let me ask, any real danger in

elevating the minds of youth, destined for business, by a liberal course of study, and by teaching them the elements of science and general knowledge? Not in the least. Fix your eyes upon the most intelligent and well informed merchants, or farmers, or mechanics, in the community—those who either had, originally, the advantage of a good education, or who have made the greatest efforts to supply the defects of a bad one, and tell me whether they are spoiled for business. Are they not seen to pursue their respective callings, as diligently, and at least as wisely, as less informed men of the same class? When merchants form libraries for their clerks, and mechanics for their apprentices, and farmers for their sons, as of late years they have extensively done, we have their judgment distinctly expressed on this point; for the avowed object in these cases is, to excite a taste for reading, and advance the intellectual improvement of the youth under their care. But they would not do this, if they found that by improving their minds, they destroyed their industrious habits, and unfitted them for business. I might advert to other illustrations on this point, were it necessary; but I cannot think the case requires it.

But now there arises, it may be, in the mind of the parent, the most serious difficulty of all. He

admits the principles which have been here urged—acknowledges the importance of thorough education to all classes of the young—desires above all things to prepare his son for the highest respectability, and the most extended influence and usefulness, consistent with his calling; and is deeply sensible that to this end intellectual improvement is indispensable; but how to secure the object within the limit of his means, and especially within the time allotted for this purpose, he is utterly at a loss. There appears to him a difficulty in the case wholly insurmountable. His son, so far from having any peculiar relish or aptness for learning, is, perhaps, averse to it, or backward in its acquisition. He is unable to send him abroad to secure the advantages of a better school than the neighborhood affords; and fears that if he should, it would be in vain, since he has hitherto made but little proficiency.

To this desponding statement I reply, that in some of its applications, it certainly presents difficulties, not altogether imaginary; but if I can once be satisfied, that the parent feels his own responsibility, and does in truth, realize the importance of elevating and liberalizing the mind of his child, so that he is willing for this end to make every consistent sacrifice, the most formidable

difficulty of all is removed : for now an assurance is given, that when the question who shall teach his son, comes to be debated—his great inquiry will not be, who will teach him at the lowest price, but who will do it in the best and most thorough manner ; and instead of being chiefly anxious to amass money to set his son up in the world, he will prefer to expend a liberal share of his income, in providing those means of mental cultivation, which the enlightened enterprize of the day is now so abundantly furnishing. Nor can the child, in this case, fail to catch the spirit of the parent. When the son hears the father often speak of the value of education, and the benefits of general knowledge, as the means of respectability and usefulness, and urging their superiority to mere wealth and to all those low enjoyments which wealth can bestow upon the ignorant man ; and when he sees him daily acting according to these principles, his associations will become strong, and can scarcely fail of influencing both his views and his conduct.

I am aware that in regard to those children who have already spent most of the years, usually allotted to common education, and spent them as they too generally do in our schools, to little comparative profit—making at best but very limited

advances in knowledge, nothing effectual can now be done; but with respect to those of tender years, something may—something *must*—something *will be done*.

The active spirit of the age is awake on the subject of education. On no other subject, perhaps, is it more awake. It begins to scrutinize the books in current use, to pry into the different modes of instruction, to point out deficiencies, to expose neglects and abuses, and demand reform and improvement. And reform and improvement will be the result. Children may be taught with but little increase of expence, *a hundred fold* more knowledge during the first fourteen or fifteen years of their lives, than that which has ordinarily been obtained within this period. You may regard this statement as hyperbolical; but I believe it literally true, though I cannot, in this place, enter minutely into the grounds of my confidence. My firm conviction is, that if God should spare any of us, who are now in middle life, to old age, we shall see such a complete reform of the views of parents in regard to the importance of education, such an improvement in the books used, and the modes of instruction adopted in our common schools, as well as in the skill of the teachers, as shall make the whole system in-

conceivably more practical and efficacious than it now is.

I do not design to extend my remarks upon schools at this time, as I shall have occasion to recur to the subject in a subsequent lecture. But I would suggest that one important improvement, which we may hope soon to see realized, is that of making the business of teaching, in all its various departments, a *profession*; so that the guides and instructors of our children, shall be trained, at least with as much care and skill to *their* business, as our mechanics are to *theirs*: and that the former shall feel as deeply that their success in life depends on their reputation for skill, as the latter. This single improvement would make a most material revolution in the state of our schools, and insure a far more efficient system of instruction than is now enjoyed.

But in accomplishing that intellectual culture and elevation of mind, which I am recommending, and hoping to see realized, changes must be effected in other particulars besides those to which I have adverted.

Intellectual cultivation must be commenced, earlier, than it has been. Parents, in general, have supposed that nothing could be done for the improvement of their children's minds, until they

were four or five years of age; and even then very little. The main object in sending them to school at that age, has been to be relieved of the trouble of watching over them. Progress in knowledge has hardly been expected, and has been regarded rather as a secondary consideration. Now we are altogether in an error on this point. Intellectual cultivation may be begun by the mother, in the very first years of infancy; and by using pictures, alphabets, and books adapted to her purpose, she may, by the time her child is three years old, do more to strengthen his mind, and store it with useful information, than has commonly been done in three times that period. This can be done too, within the limits of that time which many mothers might secure; and if any of this class, whom I address, say, that admitting they had time, they should not know how to apply themselves advantageously to the task assigned them, I answer—if they feel suitably the importance of the work itself, and their own responsibility, they will be willing to seek, and to study those manuals which have recently been published, for the very purpose of pointing out their duties.* They can do much, if they will adopt the principle which has been so efficacious

* See among others, an admirable little work entitled, "Hints to Parents," in the spirit of Pestalozzi's method.

in other cases. Said the venerable Raikes, I know not what I can do in the way of instruction for these children, these young immortals, but I can *try*. He did try ; and you know what great things he accomplished, and what far greater things he taught others to accomplish.

I acknowledge the serious embarrassment which those mothers must experience, who have not only numerous cares, but daily personal labors devolving upon them, and who perhaps, have enjoyed but limited advantages themselves ; still I would say even to such, if you are intent on your object, you can accomplish not a little ; and much more than you now imagine. Feel my respected friends, *feel deeply* on the subject of your children's early improvement—use all diligence to promote it ; and then mark the result : If you do not accomplish all which might be desired, you will have done what you could ; and should you fall entirely short of your aim, yet even to *fail*, in such a cause, would be honorable.

But for the further encouragement of these, and all other faithful mothers, it may be stated, that there is great reason to believe that the plan of *Infant schools*, now so successfully practised in Great Britain, and in a few instances most auspiciously commenced in our own country, will soon come in to their aid. These schools will take your children

from the nursery, at two years of age, and instruct and treat them as a mother of leisure and competent education would do, till they arrive at the age of six or seven, and are prepared for higher schools. Such schools are in successful operation in several of our large towns—have been visited and highly approved by the most enlightened parents, and will without doubt, soon be introduced into all our cities and villages.*

I have dwelt this evening upon physical, and particularly upon intellectual education : I wish not to be misunderstood. I do not forget that man has a higher interest than the improvement of his bodily, or even his intellectual powers ; I do not forget that he has a moral nature—is a free and accountable being, and is acting continually with reference to the infinite retributions of eternity. I bear in mind that if the heart is wrong, all is wrong ; and that whatever may be your child's physical or intellectual training—however high he may have ascended the steeps of science, or however profitably he

* Since the delivery of these Lectures, the author has had the opportunity of examining several of these schools ; and he cannot repress the conviction he entertains, that they are yet to be owned as among the most important means of human improvement. Their institution, like that of sabbath schools, is the opening of a new and cheering page, in the history of our race.

may have strayed in the gardens of literature, yet if his moral powers have remained uncultivated, and the evil tendencies of his nature unsubdued, he will be likely to prove a blessing, neither to himself nor to the world. Talents and learning may make a *great man*; but they can never make a truly *good man*. How often, alas! have we seen a wicked heart and unholy, selfish and ungovernable passions, enlist all the energies of a mighty mind in the cause of evil—in high handed rebellion against God, and in desperate efforts to corrupt the best principles and blast the dearest hopes of man.

You will observe that the ground upon which I have urged the importance of giving our children higher intellectual advantages, has been with express reference to their increased influence and usefulness; but to secure this end I am aware that they must cherish right principles and feelings: They must entertain that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, and breathe that love that seeketh not her own. But our duty to our children upon this point, furnished a subject too extensive and too important to come under consideration in this discourse. *Moral education*, therefore, or the great concern of training our children to right principles, dispositions, and habits, will constitute the theme of my next Lecture.

LECTURE III.

PART II.

DUTIES OF THE MIDDLE AGED, AS PARENTS.

DEUT. vi. 6, 7, 9.

And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children ; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up ; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house, and on thy gates.

IN my last Lecture, your attention was directed chiefly to intellectual education : The subject of *moral culture*, now claims our consideration.

To the deep interest of this topic I have already alluded. It cannot be necessary to enlarge upon it, as the whole course of our discussion will tend to magnify its importance. There certainly can be, but one sentiment, as to the desirableness of having our children pursue an upright and useful course in the world. As wise

parents, it can give us little satisfaction to see them possessed of perfect and healthy bodies, and sound and cultivated minds, if at the same time, we are compelled to behold them employing their varied powers and acquisitions, in the service of error, and staining all their glory in the dark waters of licentiousness and guilt. Nothing can be plainer than that in proportion as we strive to discipline, liberalize, and elevate the minds of our children, and thereby increase their ascendancy and influence over other minds, in the same proportion ought we to feel solicitous that this ascendancy and influence should be directed by sound principle, and be employed for wise and salutary ends. No human being is less to be envied than that parent, who by bending all his efforts to improve the intellect of his child, while he neglects to cultivate the moral sense, to subdue evil passions, and bring the whole soul under the influence of christian principle, becomes the instrument of training up and giving increased power to a viper, only that he may become a deadlier foe to all about him; and strike his fangs deeper and pierce with keener sorrows the bosom that warmed and nourished him into life.

Results of education not unlike what is here described, are so common, and yet so deplorable,

that the inquiry is naturally raised whether they are unavoidable ; and if not, why do they so often occur ? If any light can be thrown upon this subject, I am sure an acceptable service will be rendered to parents.

As I can offer only general remarks upon the extensive topic before us, your interests will, it is apprehended, be best consulted, by pointing out some of the more *prominent causes of failure*, in the great business of moral education.

The progress of the discussion may do something to decide the question above raised, whether failure be unavoidable—whether, do what we will for our children, their future course must be altogether uncertain ; but it seems desirable that this important point should be settled at the outset. For this purpose, we introduce a decision from which there is no appeal. Train up a child, saith Inspiration, in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. It is admitted that the sacred writer, here establishes only a general principle, and not one absolutely without exception. But such a principle he does establish ; and in doing so, virtually decides the question which has been proposed. He affirms the practicability of parents exerting over their children, such a moral influence, as shall be ef-

fectual in forming their character, and in controlling their subsequent course through life.

The introduction of the above passage from the records of unerring Wisdom, leads me to lay down, at the very threshold of this subject, the important principle which it embraces; trusting that in the subsequent remarks, it will be a light to our feet and a lamp to our paths.

‘Train up a child in the way he should go.’ I fully assent to the following observations of a late able writer, in applying this passage to the subject of early moral cultivation.* “If then you would know what a right moral education is, or learn in what way to train up a child, consider in what way he should go, when he has become a man. What a man ought to be, he ought to *begin* to be, while he is a child. In external features—in intellectual powers—such as memory, reason, taste, imagination, and in all our moral powers—in conscience, in the whole circle of the affections and passions, which make up our moral nature, the *man* is only a *full grown* child. Therefore, with the strictest propriety it is said, train up a child *in the way he should go*—accustom a child from the beginning, to think, to feel and to act, in his little sphere, as you would have him think, feel,

* See the excellent Tract entitled ‘*Christian Education*,’ No. 194.

and act in the larger sphere of manhood—as you would have him do, indeed, forever.”

Though it is not strictly proper in assigning the causes of failure in moral education, to advert to cases where the necessity of such education is denied or wholly disregarded by parents, yet considering the number of these cases, I cannot forbear a passing notice of them. It is as painful as it is surprising, that fathers and mothers should be found within the limits of christianized society, who feel themselves under no obligation to impart to their offspring, moral and religious instruction. It seems next to impossible that they should be left to doubt, for a moment, the importance of this great interest. Do they adopt the unwarranted sentiment that their children are naturally disposed to do right, that they will act according to intelligence, and that all which they need is to have their minds cultivated and their understandings illuminated by general knowledge? I know that this has been a fashionable doctrine of infidel philosophy, and seems indeed, not unsuited to the madness of that system ; but it might well have been hoped that it would never have been associated with any thing which bore a fairer name. It not only contradicts the Scriptures, but all history and all sober obser-

vation. This was a favorite sentiment of the Continental Illuminati. It was extensively prevalent in France, at the period of the Revolution ; and the scenes of that dark and awful day, furnish the best practical comment upon its soundness. The men who had the largest share in those scenes, were among the number that taught, that light and knowledge were elevating men to the point of *perfectibility*.

I am unwilling to believe that there are, at this time, many parents who, upon the ground here supposed, neglect to combine moral with literary culture. Will they then say, that direct endeavours to influence the moral course of children, are altogether unavailing, and attempt, as some have done, to sustain their position by adverting to facts ? Will they say, as has often been said, that those children who have been educated the most strictly, and carefully, with respect to their religious principles and moral habits, have proved to be the worst, certainly as bad men, as any in the community ? I reply that it is not to be doubted that there have, in some instances, been positive and material defects in the system adopted in such cases, which, combining with other causes, have occasioned unhappy results : Still the position here assumed, and held up in the

light of a general principle, can by no means be sustained by a recurrence to facts. Those who attempt to do this, always rely upon insulated examples. They refer to this, and to that case, where a strict moral and religious education has failed to secure the desired result ; but they neglect to take general views. They do not advert to societies and districts of country, where an unusual general attention has been given to such education, and compare the moral principles and habits of the people, with those of other sections, where less attention has been paid to this subject. Did they do this, they would at once be convinced of the fallacy of the principle which they adopt. Indeed, I am astonished at the want of sound philosophy and just observation, evinced by not a few intelligent persons on this point. It seems altogether unaccountable that any one should have lived to mature years, and yet in spite of personal experience and the testimony of universal history, should affect to doubt the happy general influence of early moral and religious instructions and associations, over subsequent life. One might with equal propriety, and scarcely less regard to facts, profess his doubts whether the magnet exerted any controlling influence over the direction of the needle, because through

the operation of disturbing forces, this influence appears, in certain cases, to be varied or suspended.

But I will not further press the argument upon this point, although it is certainly one of great importance ; and it is to be feared that wrong, or at best lax and unsettled views with regard to it, extensively prevail. I will merely add, that the sentiment, that moral culture and discipline are unnecessary or ineffectual, is manifestly opposed to the whole tenor of the Scriptures and particularly to the charge given to the people of Israel in our text. They are here commanded to teach their children the great things of God's law, with all possible diligence, imbuing the mind with their heavenly influence, when they lie down and rise up, when they go out and come in. But how profitless a service must this be, if not fitted to exert a salutary and abiding moral control ? Those then, who are willing to take the Scriptures for their guide in matters of duty, and who believe that they have not in vain required us to train up our children in the way they should go, cannot, consistently cherish doubts or indifference on this subject.

But whatever may be the real sentiments of parents, in regard to the propriety of attempting to

train up their children in the right way, there is comparatively, little effected; and it is obvious that their views and their practice, must be, in many instances seriously defective. I observe then,

1. That parents do not commence the business of moral instruction and influence, *as early* as they ought.

It is hardly too much to say, that the work of moral discipline should be began as soon as your child is capable of perception. "A skilful vigilance may even in the earliest period of childhood, do much toward the promotion of the future character, by presenting such objects of attraction as may give an agreeable and useful exercise to the infant powers; by connecting the most valuable sentiments with associations of pleasure, and by warding off such impressions as might pervert or debase the affections." Many seem to suppose that nothing can be done to form moral character, until instruction can be conveyed by conversation; but this is unquestionably a mistake. What reason is there to believe, that rough and unkind treatment, and impatient and frowning looks may not act unfavorably upon the temper of a child as soon as it is capable of discerning or feeling any thing? We know well the unhappy influence of these things upon children at a later period.

They will sour the sweetest natural disposition. Why then should they not produce the same effect upon tender infancy, when the temper is still more susceptible? There cannot be a doubt that a sad bias of this kind, is often given before infant reason perceptibly opens.

Again.—Few parents it is believed, begin sufficiently early to counteract that selfishness, which under various forms exhibits itself among the first characteristics in children. This ought to be done as soon as the child is capable of making *any*, even the lowest moral distinctions. The very moment it is seen to act from design, and to do certain things to gain favorite ends, the lesson of self denial ought to be mildly and judiciously enforced. For as selfishness is one of the *first symptoms*, so it is one of the *strongest and worst tendencies* of our fallen nature. It ought, therefore, to be met with the earliest as well as steadiest resistance. On this point the kind hearted mother is extremely prone to err. She is tempted from a spirit of false tenderness, to grant undue indulgences, and to yield too much to infant waywardness; but in so doing, she does her child an injury which she can never afterwards repair.

Although the particular under consideration is certainly one of great importance, yet I acknowl-

edge that the duties which it involves are delicate and difficult. Much depends on the intelligence of the child, and much must therefore be left to the sound discretion of the parent. All that I aim at, is to excite you to a sense of the value of right influences, at the earliest period, and the expression of my conviction that much is lost by erroneous views and consequent neglect upon this point. In many cases, before the business of moral education is even commenced, some of the worst and most pernicious dispositions, have strongly intrenched themselves in the infant bosom, too strongly indeed, ever to be eradicated.

It may moreover, be observed upon this point, that when the child is a little farther advanced and has arrived at that age in which most parents who seek the highest good of their offspring, begin to attach some importance to moral influences, as the means of education, they still do not, in general, properly estimate the extent to which these influences are operating to form moral character, and are not therefore, sufficiently wakeful and systematic in their efforts to give every sentiment and passion the due direction.

After all that has been said and written on the subject, we are not yet sufficiently sensible of the efficacy of those instructions and counsels that

are imparted during the tender years of childhood, nor of the enduring influence of those associations which are then formed. Do parents, in general, at all enter into the meaning and feel the force of the following remarks, which stand connected with those which were quoted above from the same writer?

“The subjects of thought and feeling, the scenes of interest and action are not, it is true, the same in tender as in mature years. Yet the child has a little world of his own, as large to him, as full of objects, as much diversified by good and evil, as capable of engaging his thoughts, of kindling his ambition, and of firing all his petty passions, as is the world in which the man exists, to him. The child as really has a character in that little world, as the man has in his greater world; and this character, in *essential points*, is likely to be permanent. It will not be shaken off unless by divine power, on going into higher scenes of life. Its features may be modified as those of the face are by age, but like those, they will probably continue substantially the same; and only become more prominent and more unchangeable as life advances, and the sphere of action widens, till the child which yesterday seemed to live only in the present moment, and to have all its desires and thoughts

limited to the walls of the nursery, has become a man—extending his thoughts over a world, and linking his sympathies with his whole race—has become an angel taking in the creation at a view, and dwelling in eternity.”

If these things are so, (and that they are so you will not on reflection be disposed, I think, to deny) then it is manifestly of the *last* importance so to regulate the associations, desires, and partialities of children, in their earliest years, that they may be directed only towards what is good and useful; and their aversions only towards what is bad or pernicious.

And here we ought to keep in view, and properly estimate the principle of imitation. It is a principle universal in children, and of incalculable power and influence upon character. They adopt implicitly, and almost inevitably, the sentiments, the manners and habits of those, to whom they are accustomed to look up for counsel and protection. You can hardly fix upon that time in the life of a child, when he is too young to be influenced by the exhibition of a good, or contaminated by the contagion of a bad example. He necessarily connects the idea of excellence with that object, towards which, he sees the desires of his parents or his superiors invariably point; and with

the objects of their aversion, he as necessarily associates the idea of something evil or worthless. Through the silent operation of example, therefore, we may do much to form the character of our children, by fixing their taste, their views and estimates of things, long before they are able to bring these things out into actual life. What a sacred obligation does this impose upon parents to weigh well the motives, and the principles, which are seen to govern their conduct generally—and especially in their families and toward their children; and watchfully to scrutinize the temper and dispositions which are exhibited in daily domestic life. They ought never to present to their view, qualities which they would be unwilling they should imitate, to use language which they would not have them repeat, or to act upon principles which it would be unsafe for them to imitate. Many are evidently insensible to the importance of this point. It is no uncommon thing to see a parent practice deception upon his child, and perhaps the very next hour reprimand or punish the child for practising the same upon him.

2. I notice as another cause of failure, *the want of system* in the efforts of parents for the moral education of their children. It is evident that in

this, as in every important interest to be pursued, system is indispensable ; and when once formed, it should be steadily adhered to. Our children should be made to feel, that we attach the highest value to moral principle, character and influence. They should behold, from day to day, our anxiety on this subject with respect to them. We should often sit down to their instruction, and do it with cheerfulness and delight. Our duty should never be attended to as a mere task : Neither should our system be one of cold, formal, abstract speculation upon morals and religion—to be measured out in equal portions, and stored up in the memory ; so that the parent shall feel that his work is done, and his obligations discharged, when he has asked a given number of questions, or heard a certain number of pages of the Bible or other good book recited. This does not deserve the name of instruction, and moral culture. But it is to be feared that it has been too often substituted for it ; and by exciting disaffection toward the whole subject of scriptural morality and true piety, has occasioned the most unhappy results, both to the individuals concerned, and to the cause of christian education.

In opposition to this course, we ought to be visibly and deeply in earnest in all our efforts to lead

our children in the straight and narrow path of truth and duty. We ought to pour our whole hearts forth in our instructions, and strive so to exemplify and render them practical, that they shall interest and profit. Mothers, especially, ought to make every effort to qualify themselves for the important service which seems peculiarly to devolve upon them, of guiding and controlling the tender minds of their children, and fortifying them with christian principles—a service to which their natural constitution of character and feeling has peculiarly adapted them.

And here I cannot forbear noticing that the advantages which parents of the present generation enjoy, for the right training of their children, above those which were enjoyed by past generations are great. They demand our gratitude, and ought to awaken and encourage us to increased fidelity and exertion.*

* Allusion is here made to the multitude of books, published in a pleasing form by individuals and societies, for the benefit of the young. These publications, will it is hoped, do much to improve both the minds and the hearts of children. The author begs leave however to suggest one caution in regard to the character of the books. He has feared that fiction was prevailing too much in them; and that it was producing in children the same love of *excitement*, and the same disrelish of sober truth which novel reading is seen to create in persons of more mature age.

In addition to the want of system, another cause of failure in education, may be found in the *want of consistency*. Parents give their children good moral and religious instruction—they urge the importance of sound principle and true piety ; they exhort them to shun sin and temptation—to abhor vice and licentiousness in every form, and to cultivate whatever is honest, lovely, and of good report. They tell them that the body is not the noblest part of man, and ought not to receive the chief attention ; that riches are not the supreme good, and ought not to be pursued as such : They instruct them that *character* is every thing—that intellectual acquisitions and moral worth are treasures which ought, above all others, to be sought. These it will be admitted are lessons true and good ; and if all parents who teach them, would be careful to carry them out into their practical influence and results, it would be happy for their children, and make a revolution in the general effect of domestic discipline, most auspicious to the best interests of man. But how is the fact ? Is it not to be feared that many while they thus in words recommend piety and virtue to their children as the pearl of great price, do in works deny this ? They call upon them to renounce the ‘ pomps and van-

ities' of the world ; but by their daily conduct and conversation, they seem to say that the world is the *chief good*, and the attainment of its distinctions man's *chief end*. When they have spoken to their children of vice in the abstract, it has been in the language of abhorrence ; and yet when exhibited in particular characters, or under certain specious forms, if they do not directly countenance it, yet they speak of it in mild and palliating terms. They may be heard perhaps to praise without discrimination men notorious for irreligion or open vice, because they are recommended by the honours of office, or the attractions of wealth ; or because they happen to hold an important rank in a favorite political party.*

They have always charged their children to avoid sensuality and all intemperance ; but they are perhaps seen themselves to walk carelessly, on the very borders of that yawning and bottomless abyss. Instead of applying to the intoxicating beverage, that divinely wise maxim—touch not, taste not, handle not—they are perhaps often seen pouring out the liquid poison into the chal-

* How often has the writer known christian parents guilty of gross inconsistency in this last particular ? and can such imagine that their children are blind to these things ?

ice of death, praising its high spirit and fine relish, and sending it around the circle of their friends as a special act of kindness ; and thus it is that they teach their children or dependants to shun temptation ; and thus it is that they guard themselves and others against intoxicating sensuality !

They have taught their children it may be to respect divine institutions, and rebuked every deviation from such conduct, yet often shewn no very sacred regard to these institutions themselves. They have directed their love of praise to its proper end, have enforced the importance of seeking true glory, and especially of seeking the honor that cometh from God ; but they have exhibited themselves as panting after worldly reputation and political ascendancy, and to compass their ends, have courted the favor of the great much more than that of the good. Instead of praising excellence wherever it was found, they have lightly esteemed virtuous poverty ; and have bestowed their admiration on those who had no other claim to it, but the distinctions of birth and wealth ; and to crown this climax of inconsistency, when they have come to seek situations for their children abroad, either in business, or to fit them for business, they have not shewn

supreme regard to spiritual, but to *worldly* considerations : They have not asked chiefly where their principles or their morals would be least likely to become corrupted, but where their secular interests would be most in the way of being advanced. Who does not know that among parents, (and not seldom I fear among parents professedly *christian*) far more earnest inquiries are made as to the health of the climate where a child is to remove, and as to the prospects for business and rising in the world, than as to the religious and moral state of society, and the exposure to temptation and sin, to which the soul is likely to be subjected.

The same preference of secular to spiritual, of temporal to everlasting interests, is seen in a thousand other forms ; and of what value are the cold lectures of such parents on the worth of the soul and the superiority of moral to pecuniary considerations ? and what influence will they have in forming the views and the decisions of the child when weighed against this daily practical comment wholly of a different character, and speaking a totally opposite language ? I am amazed at the conduct of many parents as exhibited in these and other similar particulars. It marks either an unaccountable insensibility to the moral

and religious welfare of their children, or a still more unaccountable ignorance of those influences which operate to mould the characters and habits of the young. It probably includes something of both. How often do we hear parents use language not unlike this. I am going to place my child with such a person, in this, or in that situation. I do not altogether like the place. His employer is not a man of principle; and I fear he will not have correct sentiments instilled into his mind; that he will not always hear the most decorous language, or have exhibited before him the fairest examples of virtue; but the situation is a very advantageous one: My child's master is skilled in his art, and is a thorough man of business; and more than all, he makes him the fairest offers, and will probably be the means of setting him up in the world. The situation is therefore chosen, and the child at a highly susceptible age, is consigned over to the most pernicious moral influences, with perhaps a solemn charge not to suffer his mind to be affected by them. This is not fancy, but melancholy fact. Conduct strongly resembling this, is not unfrequently exhibited; and however consistent it may be with kindness of heart, the wisdom it evinces resembles nothing so much as that of a parent who

should precipitate his child into the crater of a volcano,—charging him at the same time to guard himself against the assaults of the fiery waves that rolled below.

My friends, you give your children good moral and religious instruction. You do well ; shew them both when you are imparting it, and subsequently—shew them by all that you do, and say, that you *believe* what you teach—that you mean to act according to the elevated principles which you inculcate. Do not subject yourselves to the cutting reproof administered by the Apostle to the Jews. Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not *thyself*?

Moral education to be successful, must not only be systematic and regular, but it must be consistent, universal, and eminently *practical*. It must control every thing, and direct every moral influence that is brought to bear upon your children. ‘It should select their schools, their companions, their amusements, their books ;’ and when they go from beneath your direct influence, it should have the greatest weight in choosing their situation, their employment, and their calling in life. We know that all vocations have their temptations ; but there are certain modes of employment, certain trades and arts, which as

things now are, peculiarly jeopardize the morals and habits of those who pursue them. Ought not a parent to use a wise discretion then, in making his selection from a thousand different methods, by which his children may secure to themselves a competent support : and ought not moral considerations to be allowed a paramount influence, in all those plans and decisions which are to mould their characters, and deeply affect their state, both for this world and the next ?

4. Another cause of failure in moral education, may be found in *the neglect of parents, early to correct the wrong tempers and habits of their children.* The parent through dislike to interfere with the child's inclination, and willing to avoid that expense of feeling, and that watchfulness which fidelity would involve, hopes he will live to outgrow his fault. Perhaps he is peevish and passionate, and makes the whole family uncomfortable ; but instead of setting himself with earnestness to correct the evil, the parent hopes he will ere long find such bad tempers are their own avengers, that they inflict upon their subjects even more pain than they do upon those about him ; and that he will thus be induced by self love, to reform. He is disobedient to his parents, and disrespectful to his superiors generally ; but the hope

is entertained that his good sense, will ere long lead him to practise good manners. He is supremely selfish, and cares for nobody's convenience or comfort but his own ; but it is thought that when he comes to be a little older he will learn that he must be beholden to others, as well as others to him ; and that he will then of course find it necessary to cultivate benevolence and generosity. He is given to deceit, equivocation and double dealing, and seems to be training for a thorough villain, but no deep and lively concern is felt on the subject : These it is said, are only the common faults of children—he will soon be ashamed of these mean vices, or at any rate will discover that honesty is the best policy. Now there is about the same measure of sound practical wisdom, displayed in such reasonings and anticipations, as there would be if the child had a dislocated limb, and the parent should treat it in the same manner—declining to inflict the augmented pain, and incur the expense of bringing the parts to their proper places—hoping at the same time, that some future concurrence of accidental forces would accomplish the work, or that when the child arrived at maturity, and saw the deformity and felt the inconvenience to which he was subjected, he would himself by violent efforts,

restore order and strength and beauty to the disorganized system.

But no sober man was ever guilty of such folly in relation to the body, nor to any of the common affairs of life. Your gardener can teach you much better philosophy than is exhibited in the above cases. If you wish your plants or trees to possess the best shape, either for use or beauty, he can tell you when to begin to bend them to your mind—to smooth what is rough, straighten what is crooked, and prune what is redundant : And if he should advise you in order to save trouble and cost, to let all their faults grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength, under the idea that they might in time *grow quite out*, you might then apply the principle with equal safety to your children. We have heard that if a child be trained up in the way he should go, there is good reason to hope he will not subsequently depart from it ; but one would think there was little need that we should be informed, that if a child were left to *come up in his own way* ; and were in fact resigned to such influences as should infallibly train him in that very way in which he ought *not to go*, there was even surer ground to expect that he would never depart from that way. Doubtless more parents reason right, than

act right in this particular. But I fear that much error and many false apprehensions still prevail ; and I am sure none of us feel as deeply as we ought, on this point.

You will perceive that the particular here considered, involves the whole subject, and the *greatly neglected duty of domestic government and discipline*. And such is its importance, that you will pardon me, I trust, in pausing to apply my remarks by several inquiries.—Have you then parents steadily pursued such a system of government and discipline in your family, as appears best adapted to enforce your instructions, and deeply to implant in the consciences and hearts of your children, those sound principles, and right affections, which you have so often recommended by your precepts, and I would fain hope, also, by your examples? I will illustrate my meaning. You have taught your child the propriety of penitence for his faults and his sins, whether committed against God or men ; but you have often perceived in him an opposite spirit. There has been stoutness instead of brokenness of heart, in view of an act of transgression : And what have you done? Have you indulged that spirit, because you could not bear the pain, or would not incur the trouble of contending with it? then you have taken the most

effectual method to counteract all your instructions ; and done more to mar your own peace and destroy the future happiness of your child, than you could have accomplished by almost any other neglect of duty, you can imagine. Your child has triumphed in a contest where victory threatens him with ruin.—Again, you have often urged upon him the virtues of humility and meekness ; but have you taken every pains to discourage and repress the opposite traits of character—pride and impatience and revenge ? You have recommended truth, and sincerity, and frankness ; but have you labored to eradicate the vices of deceit and falsehood ?—I ask further, whether you have accustomed your child from the first, to yield prompt obedience to your commands, to be guided by *your* will and *your* counsels, rather than his *own* ? Has he learned in this way to deny himself, and to contend against the evil propensities of a froward heart ? or has he on the other hand, been allowed to do whatever seemed right in his own eyes—to indulge every bad temper and passion ; to establish within your house claims inconsistent with your own ; and in the spirit of a little barbarian chieftain, proudly to wave over your head the sceptre of his power, and dispute with you the limits of parental authority ? Then

you may have the piety of Eli, and often instruct your child, and offer for him your prayers ; and you may remonstrate with him, and say—why do ye so ? but he will in all probability pursue his chosen course ; and God, because you have not been faithful in government as well as instruction, because your child behaved himself proudly and rebelliously, and made himself vile and you restrained him not, God may bring upon you and your house, judgments and afflictions, at the hearing of which every ear shall tingle. In your old age this child may be to you what Eli's sons were to him ; or what Absalom was to David ; he may bring down your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

If I were to point to any one course of conduct, my friends, as the very worst—the most cruel and destructive which a parent could pursue, toward his children, it would be that of relaxing unduly, parental authority, and domestic discipline.

I am not here pleading for domestic tyranny nor unrelenting rigor : I utterly condemn both ; and I well know there may be undue severity as well as undue indulgence ; but the danger from the former is far less than from the latter. Moreover, undue severity is not the fault of

the age. It is rare; but that of undue indulgence, is common. The evils of the first, are not in general fatal; but those of the last are deep and durable, and often irremediable. They mingle with all the elements of moral temper and character. Divine power and grace can, we know, re-mould these elements, and create the soul anew unto good works; but so sure as Jehovah is a God of *means*—pre-eminently in the kingdom of his grace, so sure it is that if every unholy passion has been left to its natural sway over the mind, there is comparatively little probability, that any redeeming influence from above, will ever deliver the soul from the bondage of corruption. The natural progress of sin, and the increasing obstacles to reformation, are most emphatically proclaimed by God himself, when he demands—“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots, then may he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well.”

Let parents then, realizing the truth on this point, feel the deepest solicitude to correct all those faults of moral feeling, habit, and conduct, which they wish to see corrected in their children, and which, if perpetuated, would injure their reputation, blast their happiness, and destroy their usefulness in this life, and darken their hope of glory in that which is to come.

5. Another unhappy cause of failure in moral education, too common to be passed over in silence, is *the influence of bad companions*. I have before incidentally noticed the operation of similar causes at a later period in life—but I here refer to the companions of *childhood*. Through their unhappy agency, your best instructions and most assiduous efforts may be entirely defeated. Guard your dear child then, to every practicable extent, against such pernicious influences. He needs but few associates out of your own family—choose those for him; and if you cannot make him worthy of such as are good, it were better that he should have none. No parent ought ever to be ignorant *where, and with whom*, his child spends his hours of recreation, unless he wishes to educate him for perdition. It is task enough to train up a child in the way to life, without having him often encompassed with a throng, whose example and entire influence is calculated to entice him from duty, and hurry him down the broad way to destruction. Strive to make home pleasant to your children. Do not needlessly interrupt, or discourage their innocent amusements; but strive to raise their minds above undue attachment to them, by exciting a taste for books, and furnishing them with such as are most interesting and instructive, and wisely adapted to their

age and attainments. No person can imagine how much may be done in this way, till he has made a thorough trial. The difference in effect, upon the mind and heart, between spending an evening in perusing an entertaining book, and spending it with childish, not to say wicked associates, in folly, and in vain, perhaps corrupting conversation, is unspeakably great.

6. The last cause of failure in moral education which I would specify, is found in the fact, that many parents do not establish the character of their children *upon any true and firm moral basis*. They do not teach them to think, feel, and act, with supreme reference to those fixed and eternal principles of truth and righteousness, which are revealed in the Scriptures. They never give them those enlarged views of their relations to God and his government, and of their accountability to him, which his word is continually presenting. They never point them to his holy law and gospel as containing the only true standard of moral character, the only unerring rule of moral conduct; and as bringing before men those immutable principles of right and wrong, by which God now governs, and will hereafter judge the world. Many parents, it is

to be feared, have never yet adopted these principles in the government and direction of their own conduct, how then should they be able successfully to inculcate them upon their children? They love their children with a strong natural affection: They desire that they should do well, and be happy. To this end, they feel it to be important that they should cherish some just principles of action. They do not feel altogether satisfied to cast them upon the stormy sea of life, without chart or compass. But instead of resorting directly to those divine precepts which the Scriptures supply, they take up and inculcate the vague and unsettled notions of the world. The wisdom of men is chosen, before the wisdom of Him who is the inexhaustable Fountain of all wisdom.

Now let these shifting and wavering rules of action be investigated, and they will all be found to terminate in the principles of honour; or in a studious regard for *respectability* or *popularity*. Their whole scope and end may be comprehended in this single enquiry, what will *the world think and say*? I readily admit that there may be some things indifferent in themselves, in reference to which we ought to be governed, to a certain extent, by public opinion. But is it safe to adopt for ourselves, or for our chil-

dren, rules of moral conduct, founded on no surer or more permanent basis than the varying forms of popular sentiment ? Shall we rest our motives and principles of action, on the same basis that we do the fashion of our garments ; and thus lay ourselves under the necessity of often changing them, in order to accommodate them with more exactness to the prevailing taste ? This we shall certainly find ourselves compelled to do, if we adopt the rules of honour or the opinions of the world as the principles by which we are to direct our moral course.

Such principles may comport very well with a system of *Chesterfieldian education*, because the discipline which a system of this kind requires, is framed wholly and professedly with a view to credit and popularity in the world. Moral virtue, christian principle, or the fear of God, do not enter at all into the plan. But surely *christians*, or even believers in the Scriptures, cannot be satisfied with such superficial and treacherous rules of moral conduct. They are worthy of the votaries of paganism or infidelity, but they are a disgrace to those that bear even the christian name. They have been invented and practised by those who had no title to this name ; and though designed solely for the promotion of self interest

and credit in the world, they often fail of securing even this sinister and unworthy end: For since these rules aim merely at regulating the outward conduct according to the maxims of worldly wisdom, they cannot be expected to control the thoughts and affections. They come not home to the heart—that great fountain of moral good and evil; of course they can exert there, no purifying and health giving influence.

How many youth, educated under such false and pernicious principles of human policy, while the divine precepts of the Bible were disregarded, do we see hastening down the broad road to ruin? Taught to live only with a view to the good opinion of the world, their corrupt passions, purified by no holier and restrained by no stronger principle than this, hurry them along the guilty path of pleasure and dissipation, and finally plunge them into the awful abyss by which this path is terminated.

Let me address parents, plainly and seriously upon this subject. If you love your children and seek their highest good, you must lay the structure of their moral principles on a broader and surer basis than that which I have been describing. You must carry them to the Scriptures for their rules and motives of action. You will there

find unspeakably purer and better sources of instruction, than the maxims of a vain philosophy or of worldly policy can supply. You will find the obligations to a sober, virtuous and godly life, (a life which always secures respect if it does not procure popularity) pressed home with higher and more solemn sanctions, than any which are elsewhere to be found. Open to your children this Holy Volume and shew them that their Creator hath said that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;' teach them to lead a life of piety and benevolence because it will secure for them the favor and blessing of the Almighty; tell them to shun a course of vanity and sin, because, such a course is offensive to God and ruinous to their souls, as well as destructive of happiness and usefulness in the world. When amid the early years of youth, you see that reason is weak, and the depraved passions strong; when you perceive those who are so dear to you, and in whom your earthly hopes center, bent on evil and pernicious courses, do not point them chiefly to the loss of worldly reputation, as a motive for forsaking these courses. This argument may indeed be used; but it should be used in subserviency to higher and more commanding ones. Shew them that if they walk in

the sight of their eyes and the imagination of their hearts ; if they run the rounds of pleasure and dissipation, wasting their time and their property ; abusing their talents, and perverting their influence, they sunder every tie that should bind them to heaven or to earth, to God or their fellow creatures, and that God will *surely bring them into Judgment for all these things.*

Do you doubt the power of such impressive scriptural truths to form the conscience and sway moral conduct ? I acknowledge they might prove ineffectual in the case of one who had grown old in sin ; and who had long ceased to fear God, or regard man. But if you begin *early and seriously* to instruct your children in such truths, and to hold up before them these high and weighty motives to a righteous and sober life ; and if you add thereto the influence of your own example, wholesome reproofs, and mild but faithful parental discipline, (looking always to God for his blessing) rest assured that you will not labour in vain. I do not say that there may not be exceptions to the general rule ; but certainly this is to use the right means to train up your children in the way they should go ; and you have not only the results of observation, but the testimony of God to

the general principle, that your efforts shall be crowned with ultimate success.

Some perhaps may imagine, that the Scriptures are too general in their principles and rules of conduct, to be of any considerable use in the instruction of young minds. They think them above their comprehension, and unsuited to excite their interest, or sway their conduct. Doubtless children need explanations of some parts of the Sacred Volume, in order to realize the full benefit of their divine teachings. But laying all these parts out of the question, there still remains a multitude of precepts and counsels and exhortations, suited to every age and every capacity; and calculated, when suitably exhibited and seriously enforced, to enlighten the conscience, to awaken a lively moral sensibility, and exercise a mighty influence over the heart and life. Nor can any one who has not made the experiment, imagine how large a portion of divine truth even young children are able to understand, or how powerful an auxiliary the holy doctrines and precepts of the Scriptures are, in the grand concern of moral education. Their agency in establishing in the youthful mind, that tender and discriminating sense of right and wrong, without which, they are wholly unfitted to act well their parts in

the world, can never be prized too highly, or employed too assiduously.*

If then my friends, you would fix in the minds of your children principles, at once just and abiding—principles which may sustain, purify, and guide them in their future course, blessing them and making them blessings, I counsel you to draw these principles from the pure fountain of God's eternal truth. Teach them to fear God rather than man—to regard his will above all mere human authority, and to despise the favor and the praise of mortals, when put in comparison with the divine approbation, and with the honor that cometh from God only.

Whatever may be the speculations and vain imaginations of men on this subject, depend upon it there is no method, other than the one here described, by which you can train up your children with a prospect equally fair of seeing them, all you can desire—blessings in their day and generation, and *shining as lights in the world*.

I have only to add, that although I have not insisted particularly, on the importance of seek-

*The Sabbath School Institution, as an auxiliary in education, does not need the author's feeble praise: It is above all praise; and the subjects of its benign instructions are becoming its living letters of commendation, 'known and read of all men.'

ing the divine blessing, to rest on our endeavours, yet I hope none have supposed that I undervalued the aids of divine grace, or imagined that any means, or assiduity of instruction on our parts, could secure the highest ends of moral education ; could renew the soul, restore harmony to its deranged moral powers, and re-instamp upon it the lineaments of that divine image which sin has defaced. This is the new creating work of the Spirit of God ; and that gracious interposition by which alone it can be accomplished, should be daily and fervently implored, by every parent who desires the highest good of his children, and longs to see them prepared not only for temporal usefulness and happiness, but for the joys of God's holy and eternal kingdom. It has been my endeavour to point out the chief means which God was calling upon us, as instruments, to employ. The external forms of that agency which I have urged upon parents, in the great business of moral cultivation, all may go through with ; but it must not be disguised, that in regard to the duties involved, especially some of these duties, piety—living and active piety, in the parent, is indispensable to complete fidelity, as it is also to the fairest hope of success. It can hardly be necessary to ask, whether one can suitably recommend sentiments

and feelings which he never cherished, or heartily press the obligation of those christian duties, which he has himself never practised : But if he could do this, what expectation of success might he indulge, while the persuasion which flowed from his lips, was counteracted by the whole force of his example ?

Let those parents, who appreciate in some measure, the extent of their duties toward the souls, as well as the bodies of their children ; and who believe that the eternal state of those dearer to them than life, depends greatly on the influence which they shall exert over them—let such, I say, well consider the suggestion here made. And let all heads of families remember, that they must soon meet those under their care, at the bar of omniscient scrutiny, where the extent, and the moral character of that influence which they have exerted over them, will be made fully to appear ; and a righteous retribution shall be awarded to each individual, according as his work shall be.

That will be a deeply solemn season to all who sustain the parental relation. Who among us can hope to be found, in all respects faithful ? and yet who of us can bear to contemplate even the possibility, that our neglects of duty, should then appear among the influences, which opera-

ted to consign a darling child to the left hand of the Judge? O my friends, I must say, that I can conceive of no unfaithfulness which it will be more awful to answer for, at that dread day, than that of a parent. I can conceive of no light, in which a bad life—a wicked and *godless example* will appear more overwhelming—certainly not when exhibited on the same scale, in extent of influence, than when seen in the domestic circle, and acting upon the moral characters and everlasting destinies of these young—these susceptible—these *accountable and immortal minds*.

LECTURE IV.

DUTIES OF THE MIDDLE AGED, AS MASTERS.

EPHESIANS, vi. 9.

And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing [*moderating*] threatening; knowing that your master also is in heaven.

MATTHEW, vii. 12.

Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

THE subject proposed for your consideration at this time, is *the relations and duties of masters*. I would be understood to designate by this term, all those who have under their care children and youth, to be instructed and prepared for the practical pursuit of *any* branch of secular business. But it will be perceived by the course of my remarks, that I have more especial reference to that class of persons, (because by far the most numerous) who are training our youth to different

kinds of mechanical and manufacturing employment.*

If you would correctly estimate the importance of the subject before us, you must consider the number and influence in society, of the class of persons addressed—the multitudes of young men committed to their guardianship and direction—their powerful agency, either good or bad, in the formation of their characters; and lastly you must reflect how soon these young men, whose influence is now so limited, and whose moral principles and habits are, for this reason, so apt to be undervalued, will come forward into active life—themselves occupy the places of masters—have in their turn many youthful minds under their control, and be seen exerting an extensive and most important sway over all the dearest interests of the community.

There are perplexities attending the discussion of the topic here proposed, which arise partly from the acknowledged difficulty of the duties devolving upon masters, and partly from the fact, that these duties, vast as is their importance, have been so seldom explained and enforced, by

* The general principles inculcated in this Lecture, apply to merchants, to farmers, and to employers generally, as well as to mechanics.

men of practical experience. The few remarks to masters, occasionally found in books, will for the most part, appear to be on their obligations to impart religious instruction to those under their care, while little or nothing is said with regard to other duties, or to the general course of conduct to be pursued. This subject has however, at different times occupied my attention, and I would hope that my inquiries have not left me altogether ignorant of those facts and those principles, which should enlighten and guide me in the subsequent discussion.

In the occasional conversations which I have held with intelligent and conscientious masters in relation to their duties, they have spoken of peculiar embarrassments attending the discharge of these duties. They alledge that, in not a few instances, such has been the early education of those committed to their care, that they come to them, under the influence of lax notions and unsettled, if not pernicious habits. They have neither been trained perhaps, to industry, nor to subordination; and have arrived at an age, when the mind reluctantly submits to new and more rigid rules in either of these departments of duty. Masters of much experience, and respectability,

have also, spoken of another difficulty. They allege it as a fact, that oftentimes young men when they have arrived at a certain age, and have acquired some skill in their trade, so that they have reason to suppose, if released from present obligations, they might render their labors more easy or more profitable to themselves, begin to exhibit symptoms of feverish restlessness and impatience of restraint. They evince a strong desire to change places, or at least to divide authority, with those to whom they owe faithful service and cheerful obedience.

It is not to be supposed, that there are not numerous exceptions to these cases; but if something, not unlike what is here described, is not often visible, my young friends have not had justice done them in the premises; and bent as I am, most sincerely, on promoting their highest good, I would be the last to bring up an unfounded report to the injury of any one of their body.

It is further stated, and is unquestionably true, that serious difficulties arise from the want of uniformity among masters in their management and government of those under their care. Some are culpably lax in their rules, and in their general system of conduct. Out of business hours, they care not where their clerks or apprentices go, or what

they do, provided they do not involve *them* in trouble. Now it is characteristic of youth to be thoughtless and inconsiderate. They are apt to regard great indulgence, or the liberty of pursuing their own course, a great blessing, rather than as it really is, a great curse. When they see others therefore enjoying this fancied privilege, they are apt to claim the same, and to cherish discontent, perhaps resentment and the spirit of disobedience, if they are restrained. This evil is extensively felt, among masters : It is not however peculiar to the relation which they sustain ; the same is experienced, to a certain extent, by parents, though the evil in this case, it must be admitted, is more easily controled.

I have chosen at the very commencement of this discussion, thus to notice these alledged, and doubtless to a greater or less extent, real difficulties of masters, to which others of smaller magnitude might be added, that I might not appear regardless of the peculiar embarrassments, with which, they must unavoidably contend in the faithful discharge of their duties. But after making a candid allowance for these, and whatever other difficulties may perplex their path, they will suffer me seriously to ask, whether these peculiar circumstances, can be regard-

ed as fully redeeming their body, from just reproach for the facts in the case?

What are these facts? It is alledged, and I fear with too much truth, that the period of apprenticeship as commonly spent by young men, actually proves to them, a most trying, perilous, and often *fatal* period in their lives; that after making, as justice no doubt requires, many honorable exceptions, there are still prevalent among this interesting class of our youth, much of evil association, much looseness of practise, and vice in its diversified, and in some at least of its most ruinous forms; that a particular examination of the history of those who have been placed as clerks or apprentices, will shew, that where the benefits of a correct moral education had not previously been enjoyed, this serious deficiency has been seldom supplied; and that in numerous and melancholy instances, those who come from the country, to our cities and villages, uncontaminated, and enter into service with good principles and habits, lose both; and at the age of twenty-one, are turned out upon the world, with every symptom of thorough corruption, and with every prospect of being wretched in themselves, and curses to the community. To add to our grief and anxiety on this subject, it is thought that the

evils complained of, are at present, increasing rather than diminishing; and while temptations are multiplying on the one hand, restraints are relaxing on the other. These representations are made by those whose situation must bring them the knowledge of facts, and after careful inquiry and observation, I am constrained to believe that there is at least enough of truth in them, deeply to pain any benevolent heart; enough to justify alarm, and prompt to serious inquiry as to the possibility of remedying moral disorders, so injurious, alike to the individuals concerned, and to the best interests of society.

That many young men during the term of their apprenticeship, sink in principle, in morals, and character; and that others imbibe sentiments and adopt practises, which afterwards ripen into the most aggravated forms and habits of sin, will not be called in question. Are these evils then, brethren, to be ranked with those which are merely incidental, and so far as masters are concerned, unavoidable? or is there occasion on their part, at least to pause and consider—and to make inquisition for blood, lest through their neglect, it should at last be found in their skirts?

My subsequent remarks are designed to aid

you in answering these inquiries, and at the same time to suggest such principles and hints on the subject of reform, as may be useful to all those who seek to know, that they may *do* their duty.

1. I observe then, that with regard to many, perhaps I should say most masters, they do not make the relation between them and the young in their employ, sufficiently *parental* in its character. They are too apt to measure their *moral* responsibilities by the tenor of their *legal* obligations ; and to feel as though their consciences were discharged, when they had trained those under their care to the skilful practise of their particular trade or art. That broad and most important principle contained in my text, does not appear to bear with its proper weight on their minds in estimating the nature and extent of their duties. Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, saith the divine Teacher, do ye even so to them. Apply this rule of righteousness, which all unite to acknowledge and to commend, to the case before us. A master in all the more important points, occupies for the time being, the place of a parent. His young charge are composed of those who are either left orphans, or of such as are at all events, removed from parental watch, and care, and kindness. They are placed under

his guardianship at a period in their lives, when above all others, they need wise counsels, and faithful admonitions, and wholesome restraints. Now suppose yourself the father of a young man thus circumstanced ; what would you, that another, standing in your place, should do for your son ? How would you, that he should treat him ? In some good measure as his own child, or as an alien and a stranger ? Doubtless as his own child. You would feel deeply solicitous that he should guard his dearest interests ; that he should not only train him to skill and industry in his business, but carefully watch over his health, his principles and moral habits. You would not be worthy of the tender name of father, unless your anxieties concerning your child extended to all these important interests. But if these things are so, then whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them. Or you may if you choose change this view, and imagine yourself in the place of the youth committed to your care, with your habits and character and all you hold most dear subject to the influence of another, and apply the same rule. No one can for a moment doubt, in either case, what course of conduct such an application would demand of a master. He would, under the guidance

of such a principle, never regard his responsible relation, in a merely legal or customary view. He would never measure his duties under this relation, by the mere *letter* of that contract into which he had entered ; and feel that he had discharged every obligation resting upon him, when his apprentice had been thoroughly instructed in his particular trade or business.

I would urge masters, then, often to press upon themselves the inquiry—am I as watchful over the moral interests, the moral principles and practises of the youth committed to my charge—am I as anxiously concerned to see that they do not spend their leisure time, and surplus money, in places and for purposes, injurious to their characters and dangerous to their souls, as I should wish that individual to be, to whose care I had entrusted my son ? If there are masters who are wholly regardless of the moral welfare of their own families—nay even of their own offspring, I know this inquiry would not reach their consciences ; but I would willingly believe that such cases of gross and criminal neglect are rare ; and I cannot doubt that such an inquiry faithfully made, would detect many deficiencies in duty, make these deficiencies felt, and lead to extensive and essential reform. Under the guidance and influence of the principle

here set up, the master regarding himself as occupying the place of a parent, would keep in view the leading duties of this relation, and endeavour conscientiously to discharge them. He would cherish and manifest toward those under his care, a kind concern in all their interests. He would shew himself solicitous about their principles, their intellectual improvement, their company, and their reputation for integrity and general propriety of conduct. To this end he would often affectionately counsel them, and warn them of the dangers which threatened them. He would press upon them the importance of respecting themselves, and adopting such a course as should secure the esteem of the wise and the good. By pursuing this line of conduct, he would not only be doing his duty, and discharging his sacred obligations, but he would soon see that he was greatly extending his influence over the minds of his apprentices. He would win their respect, their affection and their confidence. Finding in him a father, they would feel bound to cherish toward him a filial spirit, and endeavour to advance his interests. Perhaps it may be objected to this, that there are young men who are not to be affected by such influences ; who are not moved by kindness ; who despise all counsel, and only

requite good with evil. There may be such; but if so, their number must be small. They are not ordinary specimens of human nature, depraved as that nature is. They are to be regarded rather as monsters in moral temper and feeling; and if you have unhappily come under obligations to such, you must discharge these obligations in the best manner in your power. But such extraordinary cases, cannot vary the application of a general principle; nor do they prove that the principle itself, is not most important and salutary in its prevailing influence.*

2. I would next proceed to notice the practise, of late becoming common in our large towns, of taking apprentices, without their being regularly *bound as such*. I cannot but believe, that this extreme looseness of relation between master and apprentice, must be productive of increasing evils to both parties, and especially to the latter. In opposition to this course, I would in every way magnify the importance, and add to the formalities of this relation. Why should we on this point, despise the experience and practise of other ages and nations? In England, and I believe in

* May not such instances of peculiar hardness and perverseness almost always be traced to the influence of evil companions or other similar causes, which the master might control?

the older countries generally, it has been customary to bind all classes of young men, who needed the instruction of a master with reference to any department of business. Their terms of apprenticeship are longer also than in this country—a circumstance which not only tends to perfect mechanical, or other skill, but adds also, materially to the importance of the relation itself; of course it is regarded by all the parties concerned, as far more sacred than with us. The salutary effects of this can easily be conceived. Both parents and masters act with caution in making their engagements. The latter do not calculate on a release from their obligations, and the former do not allow themselves for slight causes, to prefer complaints, and excite or encourage discontent and disaffection, in the minds of their children. The children of European families are, by masters in our large towns, greatly preferred to those of American parentage, because they are accustomed to correct views, and know that their parents will not interfere with masters, except for very sufficient causes.

One of the reasons assigned by masters, for not having lads bound, is that they may avoid responsibility, and the more easily dissolve the relation, if they find such dissolution either for their inter-

est or convenience. The relation cannot be regarded, then, as of a very important character, by either party ; of course the mutual obligations growing out of it, will have little sacredness attached to them. Connexions of this kind, will be often broken up ; and there will be frequent transfers of apprentices from one master to another. The consequences of this state of things, must be a lowered sense of duty on both sides. Increasing restlessness and insubordination, those most unfavorable traits in the young, will more widely prevail : And add to this, ere long we shall find, that half instructed artisans will crowd every department of mechanical employment, destroying the character and the usefulness of the whole body, and making the publick as well as individuals, extensively share in the general calamity. The evils here adverted to, are not imaginary ; they are already felt in some of our cities ; they are acknowledged to be increasing, and begin to be loudly complained of, even by many who have been the occasion of their existence.

I know of but one excuse for the loose practise in question, that appears to have the least validity. It has been said in other states, and may perhaps be said here, that the laws are so indulgent towards indentured apprentices, that

masters are often exposed to many embarrassments in the discharge of their duties towards them. The laws in this state, certainly do not greatly favor the authority of masters, especially as in the community some favorite magistrate may generally be selected by discontented and unruly apprentices, who from some paltry consideration of interest, or popularity, will not be backward to take their part, and sympathise with them in their alledged hardships and trials :* But if serious evils are found to spring from this quarter, the ear of the Legislature would surely be open to the associated complaints of our Mechanics Societies, and the relative rights of the parties concerned, might be established on a more equitable basis ; and I would urge such a measure, if called for by the present state of the laws, as more important by far to apprentices, and to the community, than even to the masters themselves. When a lad has so far gained his trade, as to have become serviceable to his employer, he will not forget that he might be serviceable to himself ; and if he does not declare himself independent, he may nevertheless, assume ground and take liberties,

* There are instances in which magistrates have, by such a course, occasioned many difficulties and great injury to the community.

altogether inconsistent with his own good, as well as subversive of all proper authority. In order to retain him in his service, the master may connive at his faults, and may grant undue indulgences ; this is a serious evil, at least to the youth himself ; he may dismiss him from his employ—that is a greater evil perhaps to his friends and to the community. If Lawyers and Physicians feel that their interests and their reputation are concerned, and still more the good of society, in excluding from their respective bodies those who are but half educated for their professions, I see not why mechanics should not have an equal interest in sustaining the standard of character and skill in their respective departments. I am satisfied then, in every view, that it is desirable to add to, rather than take from the importance of the relation which the master sustains towards his apprentices ; and that the law ought effectually to protect and encourage him in the faithful discharge of all the duties of that relation. Not that I would desire to see the tyranny and oppression of a cruel master legalized. Let the apprentice be shielded from all unreasonable violence by the mercy of the law, but let not its tenderness toward him, be so overweening, as to encourage insubordination. Let him enjoy all

proper indulgence and liberty, but let him not be made drunk with these blessings.

3. I would earnestly urge upon masters as indispensable to the safety and moral improvement of apprentices, that they should wholly exclude spiritous liquors from their shops—discountenancing even their occasional use, and dismissing from their employ every journeyman who is known to be a frequenter of taverns, groceries, victualling cellars, or other similar establishments.

We can never hope for thorough reform among apprentices, until master mechanics will take this high ground ; and the motives to do so, are certainly most urgent. The number of promising youth who lay the foundation of their subsequent ruin in habits of daily or frequent drinking, during their apprenticeship, is immense—it is appalling ; and the bare thought that this moral desolation must go on without remedy, is heart rending. But it is plain that if the evil is to be remedied at all, the remedy must be applied where the evil begins. Why should it not be so applied ? It has been again and again demonstrated, that ardent spirits are not necessary as a support to labor—not even to the severest labor. This demonstration is not drawn from theory, but from incontro-

vertible facts. Some of the largest workshops in our land, where various kinds of severe and protracted bodily exertion, are sustained, have been conducted for years, with perfect success, without the least injury to health, and yet not a drop of ardent spirits has been used, unless in case of sickness. With such facts before our eyes, and with a perfect knowledge of the ruinous consequences of an opposite course to all concerned, how can any individual hesitate as to his duty? What master, after candid and serious consideration of the subject, can deliberately persevere in a practise, which puts in jeopardy, not only the health, and morals, and character, but the life and the soul of every youth under his care—nay more, that endangers his own life and his own soul?

If a young man, trained up under daily experience of the fact that ardent spirits are unnecessary in the labors of the shop, and often warned of the danger of even moderate and occasional drinking, will afterwards resort to his cups, the master has rid his skirts of his blood. He has done what he could to rescue his body from the overflowing scourge, and to save his soul from the pains of the second death. But he who pursues the opposite course, can never feel this consolation. For aught he knows, that dear youth com-

mitted to his guardianship, and subsequently falling a victim to intemperance, might have been kept from the deadly vice, and trained to virtue and usefulness, if instead of putting the bottle to his lips, he had both by precept and example always inculcated the principles of strict temperance.*

If masters will resolutely enter upon the course here recommended, they will never find any serious difficulty in maintaining it. There will certainly be none in regard to those trades in which there has never been any settled practise of using spirits. In regard to others, let harmless substitutes for spirits be employed ; let the master himself set the example of resisting a ruinous custom ; let him pay his journeymen the sums which their proportion of spirits would cost, in some other way ; and if they will drink, let them do it apart from the shop or other place of labor, and wholly

* A highly respectable gentleman informed me some time since, that he had bred to business from forty to fifty young men, who were now, with very few exceptions, thriving master mechanics ; that he always excluded spiritous liquors from his shop, and would never employ a journeyman whose example in this particular was not correct and salutary ; and the result was, that among all these youths. only a single instance of intemperance had occurred ; and that was in the case of an apprentice, whose parents insisted that as he was not of a robust constitution, he must have the *privilege* of occasionally using ardent spirits as a refreshment, or as an auxiliary to labor.

upon their own responsibility ; let apprentices understand the rules of the establishment before they are taken ; and lastly, if it be found necessary, or be thought expedient, let the master in consequence of the abstinence of his apprentices, make quarterly presents to them in books or in money, placed to their credit in the Saving's Bank, to be kept on interest till they come of age. Experiments of this sort have been made, with entire success ; and if a master will himself set a salutary example, there cannot, in any case, be a doubt as to the result. If however, he has become so much attached to ardent spirits, that he is not willing to do this, or if he delusively imagines, (for it is mere delusion) that habit has made such stimulus necessary for him ; still I would urge him to do all in his power to save his apprentices from ruin : And he will have one advantage in his efforts ; he will be able to warn them against the evils of a dangerous habit, by a reference to his own case.

4. I would further urge upon masters the importance of a conscientious observance of the holy Sabbath ; of regularly attending on the publick worship of God ; and of their requiring their apprentices and others in their service, to attend with them.

That man must have lived to little purpose in the world, who has not learned that the religious observance of the sabbath, is one of the chief safeguards, not merely of vital religion, but of the publick morals. No individual can be pursuing a course either safe for himself, or useful to others, while he contemns this divine institution. But the leading design of this institution is defeated, and its moral influence lost, with respect to us, if we refuse, habitually to participate in its publick religious services; and the man who neglects to honour the sabbath in this way, will not long honour it at all. He will make further and further encroachments upon it; and it will in his eyes gradually lose its sacredness, until at length, he will remorselessly trample it under foot. He will be seen doing his own ways, speaking his own words, and finding his own pleasure on God's holy day.

If then, we would preserve the sanctity of the sabbath, and sustain this strongest safeguard of religious principle and general morality, we ought regularly and conscientiously, to attend on the stated worship of the sanctuary: And for the reasons that we would keep this day holy ourselves, and join in its appropriate services, for the very same, we ought to require all under our care to

unite with us. And what excuse can the head of a family make, for neglecting to do this ? God has made him ruler over his own house, and clothed him with authority to maintain good order and good morals among the members of his family. If he will not exert this authority, sin lieth at his door. If any member obstinately refuses to submit to it, duty requires that he should be discarded. The peace and order, and all the best interests of a domestic circle, ought never to be sacrificed through an unwise indulgence to an individual. The parents of apprentices ought to be allowed to direct, if they choose to do so, where their children shall attend publick worship ; but I would advise conscientious masters to decline so far as they can consistently, to take apprentices who will be called on or expected to attend places of worship, other than those where they attend themselves ; as the opposite course will often subject them to much anxiety and many embarrassments. They can never know where their apprentices are, if separated from the rest of the family. It gives, moreover, every opportunity for deceit and evasion—strongly tempts youth who are disposed to neglect public worship, to practice these arts ; and in spite of every precaution, will lead to much irregularity. I know there will

be exceptions to these remarks. But I am laying down general principles; and I speak the more plainly on this subject, because I am satisfied that apprentices often claim the privilege of attending publick worship where the master's eye cannot follow them, in order to escape accountability. Our colleges insist on all the students attending public worship, with their officers, for the very purpose of being subject to such accountability; and there is no exception to this rule, unless through the special request of the parent or guardian. No requisition can be more proper and reasonable; nor has it ever been thought a just cause of complaint; and certainly, this rule is as reasonable in its application, to apprentices as to students. It is a notorious fact, that many apprentices do not regularly attend publick worship at any place; but make the Sabbath a day of idleness or a season of recreation. Instead of being restrained by the master, this conduct is not seldom either passed over in silence or countenanced by his own example. It is easy to predict the probable end of such young men; but it is not easy to compute the amount of guilt incurred by those, whose duty it is to watch over their moral interests, and to use their best efforts to train them for duty, respectability and usefulness.

5. I will next advert to an evil which I apprehend to be the most extensive and the most difficult to be remedied, of any, to which clerks and apprentices are exposed ; I refer to their having many leisure hours to spend, under circumstances, which remove them from the inspection of their employers, and from the restraining influence of their superiors generally. From this quarter spring the greatest temptations and dangers, not only of the youth here referred to, but of all classes of the young. Young men, especially those who are most of their time, closely confined by their business, must have their hours of relaxation. None are required to employ their evenings in labor, during seven or eight months of the year ; and others are released through the whole year. It would be regarded as oppressive to compel them to spend all their leisure at home : and if allowed freely to go abroad, who can tell at what places or in what company they may employ their time ? There are, as before suggested, not a few masters who seem indifferent where their apprentices go, or what they do, out of business hours. They are given up to temptation and licentiousness, and many of them soon become thoroughly corrupt—debased alike in principles and character. Such young men always endeavor

our to strengthen themselves by adding to their numbers; of course they take much pains to seduce into their company and their practises, youth of better habits. They act powerfully upon the minds of apprentices who have little wisdom and less experience, with strong social propensities, and who are ambitious of distinction among their fellows. They strive in every way to corrupt such. They teach them to despise good counsel, to spurn wholesome restraints, and thus to shew themselves young men of spirit, and independence. In this way they fill their minds with discontent, and awaken feelings of insubordination. If these symptoms, whenever they appear, could be traced to their real source, they would, in nine cases out of ten, be found to originate in the pernicious influence of evil associates, unknown, and perhaps even unsuspected by the master. Old inhabitants of this city, high as is its character for general morality, can count up their scores of young men, whose path to infamy and perdition, was entered upon, at this very point.

Now the worst evils of such a state of things, arise chiefly from the fact already alluded to, that some masters culpably disregard their obligations, and suffer the precious youth, towards whom they ought to act the part of parents, to hasten

blindly on, in the broad way to destruction : And while this conduct continues, it must subject those who are more conscientious, to many embarrassments in the discharge of their duties. They can do no more than watch over their apprentices and others in their service, with parental solicitude, and employ in their behalf every counteracting agency in their power. By this means however, they may do much. They may exert many redeeming influences, and may reasonably hope that their faithful efforts will be crowned with success.

Among the various means of reform and moral improvement, which might be adopted, suffer me here to specify several, which appear worthy of particular consideration.

I have already alluded to the importance of seizing upon all proper occasions to administer to apprentices wholesome counsels, and kind but faithful admonitions ; and where a master conducts himself in such a manner as to secure respect and affection, this will be found no unimportant means of influence. But not further to press this point, I proceed to suggest the propriety of adopting some plan to render the money, from time to time given to apprentices, the instrument of a good, rather than as it now is, the means of

a decidedly bad influence. Most masters allow them occasionally to receive pay for extra labor. The money thus realized, multiplies their temptations a hundred fold. If the practise is permitted at all, ought not masters to keep an exact account of the monies received, and require an equally exact account, of the manner in which they are expended? But even, under this modification, the practise is objectionable, because it offers temptations to deceit. A far preferable course, might be pursued. You wish to train your apprentices to skill, and to habits of industry; allow them then, the privilege of manufacturing *premium* articles, to be sold for their benefit—the proceeds to be placed at interest, subject to their order on completing the *full term* of their apprenticeship. By this means you would not only encourage skill and industry, but form those habits of economy, which are so closely connected with excellence in the mechanic arts, and so essential to their successful prosecution. Young persons may be occasionally allowed the use of small sums of money, for present purposes; but as a general principle, it ought to be only for *known and specific objects*. If every parent and every master would adhere to this all important rule, immense evils might be

prevented, and many young men saved, that must otherwise be ruined.

Again.—Would it not be expedient, at least in our larger towns, to adopt the plan, or some modification of the plan suggested by Franklin, who himself served a regular apprenticeship, and whose practical wisdom has seldom been surpassed? A leading feature of his plan was, the raising of a sum of money by Associations or other means, to be called the *Faithful Apprentice's Fund*; to be loaned at a low rate of interest, to young mechanics, who had served out a regular apprenticeship to the satisfaction of their masters; the interest of the loan and a small amount of the principal to be refunded annually. Dr. Franklin had two objects in view in this plan; one was to encourage good conduct in apprentices; the other was to afford patronage to indigent merit. In both points of view, but especially as the means of influencing young men to a correct course of conduct, the plan is certainly entitled to the serious consideration of the philanthropist.*

Lastly.—I must be permitted to press upon mas-

* In his will, Dr. Franklin made provision for testing his scheme by experiment, in two of our principal cities. The result is not accurately known to the writer, but the principle of the plan, has been adopted in other cases with the happiest effects.

ters, the duty of making every reasonable effort to improve the minds, to enlarge the views, and elevate the aims of the youth under their care. Labor to excite in them sentiments of self respect, a just sense of the value of character, and a laudable ambition to excel in every noble and praiseworthy undertaking. By this means you will do much to rescue them from the influence of low pursuits, teach them to shun the society of the profligate, and to despise his groveling pleasures. If we except a wicked heart, nothing so much exposes any man to the seductions of vice, as a vacant mind. What we have before said of parents applies to masters; they do not feel enough on this subject, nor use their influence as faithfully as they might do, to excite in their apprentices a taste for reading, and a thirst for general information. Some youth need no influence of this kind; but others of less intellect or fewer early advantages, require excitement. They need books suited to their taste and capacities. It is not enough that they could obtain such books if they *would*. Interesting volumes should be procured and placed in their hands.

I am glad to know that many Master Mechanics begin to feel on this subject. By establishing libraries for the use of apprentices, they have ta-

ken one important step toward their moral as well as intellectual improvement ; and from the spirit which characterizes the movements of Mechanic Associations in reference to this object, we are led to hope, that this is only the first of a series of efforts to excite in this interesting class of our youth, a thirst for general knowledge, and at the same time provide the means of its gratification. What hinders the speedy establishment, at least in our cities and principal villages, of courses of experimental lectures, in the different branches of science and philosophy, for the improvement of our youth, and particularly for the benefit of apprentices ? Do not the spirit of our age, and the rapid advances of mind in every enlightened country, demand such an effort ? And where is the city or village, that could not furnish to its youth such excitements, and such facilities for improvement ? It is well known that this liberal minded measure, has of late been extensively employed in Great Britain ; and nothing is wanting to its introduction or more general adoption among us, but a just sense of its importance.

By throwing out these hints, in regard to the means of reform and improvement, I hope at least to excite increased attention to a subject in which the whole community has a deep interest.

It is a topic to which the eye of christian philanthropy ought to be continually directed, and to the importance of which, the publick mind can never be too thoroughly aroused. It must be manifest to every one who will indulge a moments reflection, that it has not, hitherto, received that attention which it justly claims. But there are circumstances of encouragement.—Many masters are beginning to feel more deeply their obligations; and are disposed to hear and consider any suggestions which may be made touching their duties. This state of feeling I rejoice to see; and I pray that it may extend and increase, until the numerous evils now acknowledged to exist, shall be removed.

It is matter of unfeigned gratitude, that the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children, and of the middle aged generally, to the interests of the rising generation, is to be numbered among the cheering signs of our times. Sabbath schools and Bible classes are exerting a powerful and increasing moral influence, and are fast training a generation for God. There is a mass of mind however, which these efforts do not and cannot reach, by any *direct* influence. Other means will, therefore it is hoped, be devised for this purpose. In the mean time, it is evident that

a portion of that moral excitement, which is produced by the general system of biblical instruction, must gradually extend to all classes, and especially to all classes of the young.

I might here mention, did time permit, various encouraging indications among the youth of our land. They are manifestly awaking to a deeper sense of the value of character, the importance of self improvement and a wider sphere of usefulness. They are forming associations for the suppression of intemperance, and the promotion of various plans of benevolence; and many of them are laboriously employed in the religious instruction of children—an employment which is seen to exert the happiest influence upon the characters of all who are engaged in it. In these movements it gives me great pleasure to observe, that that class of youth in whose behalf I have been pleading, are taking an interest and bearing a part.

As I see many of this class present, this evening, I must be permitted to say, that I hope none of them will misconstrue my remarks to masters. Not one of these remarks my young friends, has been prompted by any disposition to abridge your privileges, or lessen your real enjoyments. It is my sincerest desire and aim to increase both.

In all that I have said, I have had in view your intellectual and moral improvement, the elevation of your character, your augmented usefulness, and highest happiness. But both experience and observation have taught me the dangers of youth. I know them to be many, and great. I tremble—instinctively tremble, when I look back to that yawning gulf, upon the borders of which, I once heedlessly traced my steps, and down whose awful abyss, I have lived to see some of those who were once my companions, make the last—the *fatal plunge*. To young men during the period of their minority, no mercy can be greater than that of being rescued from their own inexperience, self confidence, and presumption, and guided and restrained by the counsels of matured wisdom ; and that youth is to be pitied, not envied, who through the unfaithfulness of a parent, a guardian or master, is left to choose his own course and walk in his own ways. It is under the influence of these views, that I have been urging upon masters their responsibility, and pressing the importance of fidelity. Yet after all, it must be obvious, that whatever may be their efforts in your behalf, these efforts will prove unavailing, in regard to all those who cannot be made to respect themselves, or be persuaded to

make personal exertions for their own improvement.

And my young friends, why let me ask, should you not respect yourselves and cherish a just sense of character? Why should you not set your standard of excellence high, and determine that you will, with God's help, make your sphere of influence wide, and that influence itself, salutary to all around you? Your situation in life does not preclude you from this noble ambition. Industry and enterprize, connected with sound moral principle, and constant efforts for mental improvement, will bear you above every disadvantage of circumstances. They will secure you respect, and weight in society; and what is more, enlarged and permanent usefulness. I would not foster worldly pride in any man; but it has been said, that in this country, business men do not suitably value a *high business reputation*—that reputation I mean, which is built upon skill, industry and unblemished integrity. We are thought in this respect, to be behind older countries. 'In England, for example, we are told, that worth of character in an old and long established tradesman or mechanic, is highly prized; the name of a business establishment, is often continued from father to son, long after the original partners have

passed away ; and the aristocracy of wealth, and nobility of blood, have not been able to prevent the existence of a law, which makes it necessary that the Lord Mayor of mighty London should be a mechanic.*

You have many examples set before you, for your encouragement—examples which urge you to lofty aims and steady efforts. The distinguished reputation of Franklin is known to you all. But Franklin was bred a mechanic. He served his time regularly as an apprentice, and was formally bound as such, though he served with his own brother.

The Scriptures have marked out for you, your course, and have placed before you the strongest inducements to pursue it. ‘Seest thou a man diligent in his calling ; he shall stand before princes ; he shall not stand before mean men.’ In Franklin’s case, this was strikingly verified. He stood before princes—was honoured by nations, and has left behind him an imperishable name. Set your standard of character and influence then, my young friends, *high* ; and strive to reach it ; and God will prosper your efforts. *He will bless you, and make you blessings.*

* See a series of sensible essays in the New York Observer for 1826, to which the author is indebted for several valuable thoughts.

LECTURE V.

RELIGION THE SUPREME GOOD.

PROVERBS, iv. 7—iii. 14, 15.

Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her.

IN the foregoing Lectures, I have directed the attention of the middle aged chiefly to the duties which they owe to others; and the course of discussion has necessarily partaken of a secular character, though at every step involving the interests of vital religion, and enforcing obligations to the faithful discharge of which the highest moral qualifications are requisite. I should however deem myself inexcusable, were I to close this course, my friends, without reminding you of your relation to God, and urging upon you those duties which more immediately respect the welfare of your own souls.

That those whom I address acknowledge the reality of this relation, and the sacredness of these duties, I cannot permit myself to doubt: Nor would I, willingly suspect any of you of a disposition to defer a serious attention to the things of your everlasting peace; for although levity and thoughtlessness have been supposed to constitute extensively the characteristics of youth, it has been claimed for middle age that it was the season of soberness of mind—of serious deliberation and calm reflection. If this claim be well founded, may I not reasonably hope, that the attentive hearing with which you have hitherto favored me, will not be denied, while a subject transcending every other in solemn personal interest, is presented for your consideration?

I have supposed you to acknowledge your relation to God as his accountable creatures. The nature of this relation and the character and extent of the duties thence resulting, none but the Creator himself can adequately unfold. The light of reason is, of itself, wholly insufficient for this purpose. The merciful illuminations of Divine Revelation, have therefore been granted us, to which we do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place.

I will now direct your attention to that portion

of this Revelation which has been chosen as the theme of our present meditations. According to the frequent manner of the sacred writers, the author of our text, under the term wisdom, describes *true religion*. He places upon it an estimate, and proclaims its value, as *a divine and saving moral principle*. Addressing those whom he knew to be prone to set an undue value upon other things, and to seek them with unwarrantable eagerness, his language is highly emphatic. Wisdom is the principal thing : therefore get wisdom ; and with all thy getting get understanding ; for the merchandise of it, is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies ; *and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her.*

Regarding this as a declaration of the excellence and preciousness of true religion, it forcibly reminds us of an illustration used by the Divine Redeemer, to enforce the same sentiment. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man, seeking goodly pearls ; who when he had found one pearl of *great price*, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

In these passages of Scripture, you perceive that religion, considered as a principle, and view-

ed in connexion with those great interests which it promotes and secures, is represented as incomparably more valuable than any earthly good, of whatever name or nature. Such being the plain and unqualified declaration of God himself, we are under every possible obligation to receive it as true, and to act accordingly, even though we should not be able clearly to discern all the grounds upon which it is made.

I propose, however, to suggest several considerations, which may serve to illustrate its truth. I would fain impress upon your minds the sentiment, that that wisdom which is from above ; that divinely implanted principle in the renewed heart, which we call religion ; which begins in the love of God—in repentance for sin, and faith in Christ ; which in its progress sanctifies, and in its end saves the soul, is infinitely superior to every other good. I would you might deeply feel, that that is only *strict truth*, which declares this to be the pearl of great price, the merchandise of which is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold,—more valuable than the proudest temporal dignities, and more precious than the richest earthly treasures, insomuch that all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared therewith.

It may here be observed, that the immortal spirit within us, cannot remain inactive ; it demands some object of pursuit—some real or fancied good, which for the time, it regards as supreme. Now this must be sought, either in the things of God and religion, or in the things of the present life. The Scriptures often place these two departments of human interest and desire, in contrast with each other, and reminding us that we can pursue but one object as *the chief good*, call upon us to make a wise election. No man can serve two masters,—ye cannot serve God and mammon ; choose ye therefore this day whom ye will serve. And that we may not in a matter of such vast moment, make an unwise choice, Infinite Wisdom institutes a comparison between opposing claims, and as already noticed, publishes in the text and other similar passages, its unerring decision.

We proceed then to observe,

1. That it appears that religion should be regarded as the principal thing—as the highest and best interest, because it is *the only effectual remedy for the moral disorders of our nature*. That man has broken away from his allegiance to his Creator, and sunk into a state of sin and guilt, is a truth that even the unenlightened heathen ad-

mit ; and that few have ever had the hardihood to deny. And it is equally obvious that under the righteous government of God, a state of sin and guilt is but another name for a state of suffering and of sorrow. Reason would teach us that the creature could not be happy in a state of alienation from his Creator ; and we need not be informed, that with respect to our race, the deductions of reason have had melancholy confirmation in the results of experience. We are exposed to many forms of evil from without ; but whatever these may be, it must be acknowledged that the moral disorders within, are by far the most fruitful sources of discomfort and unhappiness. For the truth of this position, I might safely appeal, either to your experience or your observation. Outward circumstances do, indeed often interfere, necessarily, with our happiness ; but how much oftener do they do so, merely because they cross some sinful desire, or thwart some unhal- lowed purpose, or cut off some unwarranted expectation. Although the curse of the apostacy appears in various forms of external evil ; yet it may be safely asserted, that nineteen twentieths of all the misery that our race endures from day to day, are the natural result of inordinate appetites or unholy passions. This is not only true

as a general fact, but sober reflection would probably satisfy most persons that it was true in application to their individual case. And if these things are so, then it is plain that *that principle* whatever it may be, which is most efficacious in rectifying these disorders of our fallen nature, and restoring peace and rest to the soul, is superior in value to every other. It is worthy to be prized and sought as man's *chief good*. But my brethren you do not need to be told, that God has again and again declared in his word, that the religion of the Gospel is this principle. It is an internal, vital, sanctifying principle—working by faith, purifying the heart, reforming the life, and ensuring victory over the world. Do you doubt the power of religion to achieve such triumphs and win such trophies? Why should you doubt? What is religion but the spirit of Christ? What is it but heaven begun in the soul—the commencement of a process by which the inner man is to be progressively remoulded, and the divine moral image which was obliterated by the fall, ultimately restored in all its pristine beauty and glory? Be a christian, and to the full extent in which you are truly such, you shall be like Christ; you shall find the divine energy of a holy temper exerting a sensible remedial agency over the de-

generate principles of a ruined nature. It will check the intemperance of appetite—it will quench the fires of unhallowed passion—hush the tumult of earthly desires, the ever longing aspirations after sublunary good,—and diffuse a holy rest—a calm and heaven born peace, through all the immortal powers of your soul. For this exalted and glorious end, God devised and revealed the religion of the Gospel. It was primarily for man's moral renovation and recovery to holiness. Its sufficiency for this end follows of course; and thousands of witnesses both in heaven and upon earth, have tried and have testified its power, both to purify and to save. He that *believeth*, hath *the witness in himself*.

Now can you point me hearer, to any other principle or thing, in the universe of God, that has equal efficacy—that can accomplish for you the same great moral transformation, or secure to you this substantial peace of mind? Seek the world as your supreme good—pursue it in all its fleeting and shadowy forms, and grasp its unsatisfying enjoyments. But consider—that very inordinate thirst which urges you to the anxious pursuit of these worldly interests, is itself a corrupt, a selfish and unworthy passion. It is the degenerate plant of a strange vine; its fruits are

the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah. Instead of being cherished it ought to be instantly exterminated. Now to indulge an evil propensity, to afford it aliment, is not to satisfy, but to enlarge its demands—it is not to diminish, but to add to its pernicious vigor. Let the worldling then, gain what he so anxiously seeks; let success crown his schemes of business, pleasure or ambition; and what is the result? The disorders of his moral nature are aggravated; and all his inordinate desires are strengthened by indulgence. Instead of being satisfied with past offerings, their cry for new gratifications becomes more constant and more importunate; and thus they hurry him forward with new efforts in his restless and weary way—perhaps bring him at last to a miserable end. My brethren this is not a fiction of the imagination; it is sober reality. It is a statement, to the truth of which, he who has pursued worldly good the longest, the most ardently, and I may add the most successfully, will, in his calmer moments, yield the fullest assent.

We have before us then, one of the grounds upon which the superiority of religion over every other interest, is asserted. Its cultivation as a principle in the heart, operates powerfully to rec-

tify the moral disorders of the soul, while the supreme pursuit of earthly good, by ministering to every unholy lust, produces a directly opposite result. It multiplies and strengthens these disorders, and tends to render them *inveterate and eternal*.

If these remarks commend themselves to your minds as just, then you are prepared to hear me observe,

2. That religion appears to be the principal thing—the supreme good, because *the present happiness which it confers, is superior to that which the world can give*. I know that the unbeliever has sometimes denied this. He has even boasted that in this point at least, irreligion had the advantage of religion. Its enjoyments, he has alledged, not being future, nor at all matters of faith, but of sight, of sense and daily experience, must for the time being, be superior to those of piety. But this claim rests upon the unfounded assumption, that the joys of religion are confined to a future state; and are purchased by great intermediate sacrifices—a sentiment which alas! is but too common. It prevails not merely among the young and thoughtless, but among the more mature and sober classes of the impenitent; and has doubtless proved the undoing of many a

deceived soul. Religion has been rejected on account of the sacrifices of present good and present joys which it was supposed its reception would involve. Now I admit that the brightest hopes of the christian are to be fulfilled hereafter; that the burden of his joys, and the far more exceeding and eternal weight of his glory, are to be measured out to him in the future and onward stages of his progress; yet I still claim, that the word of the Lord standeth sure—‘that godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.’

In illustration of this position, it may in the first place be remarked, that the objects with which the mind of the christian is conversant, are far more exalted than those with which the worldly man is occupied. They are the unspeakable realities and eternal things of God—his perfections and glory—his moral government over the universe—the increasing extent and growing honors of the Redeemer’s dominion—the varied orders and countless multitudes of happy intelligences that swell his triumphs and shout his praise; and finally the transcendent beauty of that holy city, and the unfading bliss of those heavenly mansions which Jesus has gone to prepare for his faithful followers. These my brethren, are the

glorious realities of religion which faith brings to the christian's view, and with which she invites him daily to hold free and delightful communion. They commend themselves to the mind as worthy to occupy its immortal powers ; they are capable of producing, and when contemplated with right views and feelings, do in fact produce, an inward satisfaction, which is in vain sought for, in the petty objects and fleeting interests of the present life. When think you was the devotee of the world, however ardent or successful his pursuit of its fancied good, heard in a calm and reflecting hour to use with reference to any of its objects or pleasures, language like that of the pious Psalmist, in view of the things of God?—language I mean so heart felt—so expressive of sober joy and permanent and satisfying delight. O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee ; because thy loving kindness is better than life, therefore shall my lips praise thee. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches. My meditation of him shall be sweet : I will be glad and rejoice in him. And again, O how love I thy law ; it is my meditation all the day. The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul ; the statutes of the Lord are

right rejoicing the heart ; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether ; more to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold—sweeter also than honey and the honey comb : They have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. Such are the holy and refreshing satisfactions which the christian derives, from the mere contemplation of divine things ; and the enjoyment of these, is moreover, pre-eminently the privilege of his most abstracted and serious hours. Now is it not an undeniable fact, that in these very hours, the unbeliever, the worldling, is at the farthest remove from happiness, and the most dissatisfied with himself, and with the objects of his contemplation, desire and pursuit ? Is he not often forced, as he values present peace, to shun seclusion, and dismiss the serious reflections to which retirement naturally gives rise ? Is it not amid the silence of the night watches that the veil is sometimes drawn aside, and the emptiness and comparative worthlessness of those things that perish with the using, are presented before the mind to break its repose—to sting the bosom with self reproach, and to fill it with harrowing reflections ?

Consider in this connexion also, another fact to which we have already referred. The christian's

progress in religion, is a progress in holiness ; it is an increased participation of the divine nature—a *progressive* recovery of the lost image of his Maker. In this sense the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Of this advancement in moral renovation, the christian is conscious. He feels the strength of sin gradually weakening. He has to contend against foes within, and foes without ; against the corrupt affections of an evil heart of unbelief, and the temptations of the wicked one ; but his conflicts are successful conflicts. He is continually cheered with a voice saying my grace is sufficient for thee ; and often he is enabled to shout—thanks be unto God that giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord. Now let me ask any one of you who will allow himself a moment for serious reflection, whether you cannot perceive that there must be real satisfaction, and true and solid delight, in this consciousness of progressive sanctification, and in the prospect of speedy and complete victory over sin ? Must there not be a peace of conscience, a satisfaction and a delight, in which the votary of the world and the servant of iniquity, can have neither part nor lot ? Here is a hidden fountain of joy which the worldly man knoweth not of, and the stranger intermed-

leth not with. When those objects and those pleasures on which he sets his heart are secured, he has grasped them only to learn that they are shadows—that they cannot satisfy the boundless desires of the immortal mind; and yet the strength of earthly affections is, as already shown, increased rather than diminished. There is, therefore, a recoiling of the mind upon itself; there is a secret consciousness of folly and guilt that necessarily begets dissatisfaction; and this is, and must be an everliving and overflowing spring of bitterness in every impenitent heart.

Observe again, that in proportion as the believer's warfare against sin is successfully waged, and he is assimilated to the moral likeness of his divine Lord, in the same proportion is his evidence of acceptance augmented, and his assurance of the divine favor rendered more complete. Instead of feeling, as he was once compelled to do, that he is swerving farther and farther from God, he feels that he is drawing nearer and nearer to him. Not with graceless presumption, but with a delightful affection and confidence, he looks up to him as a Father and a Friend. He trusts in his mercy through Jesus Christ. He commits his soul to his keeping as into the hands of a faithful Creator; and all guilty as he is, yet as a peni-

tent believer, he sits down quietly under the shadow of his glorious throne, and humbly relies on his promise that the pavilion of his mercy shall be spread out over his defenceless head.

Tell me now, O thou child of the world and of sin—what hast thou of *present joy or reward* to be compared with this? To say nothing of the exalted hopes and brighter anticipations of a future state—is not that the voice of eternal truth that assures you that even in this life wisdom is the principal thing, and godliness great gain? Therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding; for the merchandise of it is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold, *and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.*

3. I remark again that the claims of religion as the supreme good, further appear from *the secure and unfailing tenure by which its blessings are held.*

Grant for a moment, that those possessions, distinctions, and enjoyments, upon which you set your heart, and which you pursue to the exclusion of the higher things of God and the soul, are attained. You desire to be rich; you give all diligence to this end. Let your coffers then be filled with gold and your storehouses with the fruits of

the earth. You desire the favor of men ; you court honour and influence among your fellow mortals ; you plan, and toil and strive—wound your conscience—perhaps sell your soul to climb the giddy heights of ambition : let the brightest rewards of fame then be given you : let her fairest garlands deck your brow. Again you would be a child of pleasure. You would run the rounds of sensual indulgence, and sound all the depths and shoals of earthly delight,—be it so. Let all the joys of sense and sin be yours. Let the fountains of unhallowed pleasure be filled to overflowing, and pour their streams along your path. Do you say I am content, I am satisfied ? No, this is not the language of the worldling. His desires are insatiable. If he has possessed himself of one world, he vainly wishes another had been created for his use. But suppose the case to be otherwise ; suppose this fulness of all that you have panted after, does satisfy, at least for the moment. But where is your security for the continuance of these possessions, these honors and joys ? Do not the riches of this world take to themselves wings and fly away ? Do you not hold them at the mercy of heaven's ministers of wrath, the fires and the floods ? And are they not a corruptible inheritance,—one which the moth shall eat and the

rust canker and destroy? And the rewards of ambition—do you not hold them by a tenure even more frail? What permanent security have you, for the continuance of those honors which every flitting popular breath may blast and scatter to the winds? As for the pleasures of the world, the delights of sense, what can be more worthless, when chosen as *a portion*? How soon they pall upon the taste; how soon their brightness fades away? They are transitory as the lightning's flash, and are followed only by deeper darkness. But apart from these sources of insecurity, what is that portion worth in a world of disease and mortality, which a single hour's sickness and strong pain, will sink into nothingness; nay it may be, even render a cause of disgust and disquietude; or that from which death may in a moment separate its possessor forever? To what purpose is it, said one, that the garlands of fame are wreathed around my brow, while the dews of death are settling on my forehead?—Is it possible we are ready to ask that this is that portion which deluded mortals,—I might say deluded *immortals*, choose, and pursue as their *supreme good*? How widely diverse from all this, is the tenure by which the christian holds his spiritual possessions and enjoyments. That tenure is unaltera-

ble as the faithfulness of God. It cannot fail until the pillars of the Eternal's throne are moved from their firm foundations. His language to every believer is, because thou hast trusted in me, therefore will I deliver thee. I will be thy shield and thine exceeding great reward, and nothing shall ever be able to separate thee from my love.

Moreover, the believers present joys as well as his final inheritance, are in their very nature, incorruptible. Like the fountains from whence they flow, they are pure and exhaustless. Their everliving springs are to be sought amid the boundless recesses of divine truth and the infinite glories of the divine perfections. But although these fountains of salvation are hidden—'hidden with Christ in God,' yet their sacred waters are continually springing up, flowing through the heritage of the Lord, and refreshing the souls of his people. Hence the emphatic language of the Divine Redeemer. He declares that those who drink from earthly fountains shall thirst again, but immediately adds, 'whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.'

4. I may further urge the supreme value of religion, *from the security it affords in the hour of temptation.* The necessity of such a security may be doubted, or its importance underrated by the self confident ; but no man who knows himself—no man who is duly sensible of his own frailty, and who properly estimates his danger from the force of temptation, will deny the weight of this consideration. How many strong men among your acquaintances, my brethren, have you seen fall, never to rise again?—How many of your early associates and friends, whose prospects were once fair as your own, have been made the miserable victims and melancholy trophies of vice, in one or another of its seductive and ruinous forms? And are you then exempt from the common danger? Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. No, you need all the security with which religious principle fortifies the soul, and which it throws around the character of its possessor. You need that shield of divine grace and divine favor which piety and prayer alone can supply. The unrestrained indulgence of earthly affections—the pursuit of the world, in any of its forms, is full of danger. What multitudes has the inordinate love of gain

ruined forever? Inspiration has uttered its solemn warnings on this point. They that *will* be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts that drown men in destruction and perdition. Now religion, though it does not discourage industry and enterprise in business, does in every heart where its reign is established, check the strong and predominant impulse of earthly desires. True religion—the religion of Christ, involves the renunciation of the world as the supreme good, and makes the pursuit of it, subservient to a higher and nobler interest: and he who says I am a christian, and gives no evidence that his piety has become a controlling and regulating principle, alike in his heart and life, only proves that he is either a hypocrite or a self deceiver. A christian he may be in profession, but he is not such in deed and in truth. Joseph in the house of his master in Egypt, is not the only individual that has found *fixed religious principle*, his safeguard in the hour of strong temptation. He is not the only one whom a holy fear of the Lord, has led to exclaim, in view of the allurements of vice and crime, ‘how shall I commit this great wickedness and sin against God!’ Add this then to the other recommendations of piety, that it is a shield of defence; it is

the surest safeguard as well as the fairest ornament of character.

5. Again, religion appears to be the supreme good, *from the numerous incentives and aids to fidelity in duty, which it supplies.*

My brethren, I address you as those now in the most active period of life. Your responsibilities have been shewn to be great. Your duties are numerous, pressing and important; and your influence in the various relations which you sustain is most momentous. Now suffer me to ask—will any set of worldly principles which you can adopt, render you faithful? Will such principles bring to bear—do they in fact bring to bear upon your mind, motives sufficient to guide you in the straight and narrow path of duty? Will their influence be such as to impart to your daily example the stedfastness of integrity, and the beauty of truth? Will they arm you against the taunts and the scorn of the evil and vicious, and strengthen you to press forward in a course of useful exertion, alike regardless of the frowns and the flatteries of your fellow mortals? We have indeed heard of a principle that can give victory over the world; but you need not be told that this is not a principle of earthly origin; for a house is not divided against itself. We have heard of an affection

which sweetly constrains its subjects—which inspires them with a holy zeal in the cause of God and man, and makes them fruitful in labors of love; but we have never learned that this benevolent affection was kindled at the altars of mammon, or at the shrines of any of those idols which the men of this world worship. I do not say that worldly principles and maxims may not avail to render you reputable, and in many respects useful members of society; but I do say, not only that these principles do not furnish security in the hour of temptation, nor any adequate safeguard against *presumptuous sins*, but that in reference to many departments of human *duty*, they utterly fail of exerting upon their possessor any proper or sufficient influence. There are fields of most important labor and usefulness, open to every man, which he will never occupy and cultivate, except under the constraining power of religion. In a world like ours—a world of sin, and guilt, and misery, there is a moral influence, which every man is bound by the strongest and most sacred obligations to exert; and that influence in its highest and most effective instrumentality, can flow only from religious principle and feeling. That spirit brethren, in which holy men of old, patriarchs and prophets resisted unto blood, stri-

ving against sin—that spirit in which they preached truth, and wrought righteousness in the midst of wicked and perverse generations ; that spirit which animated Apostles and Martyrs, and enabled them to prosecute incredible labours, to endure trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, and count not their own lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and faithfully execute their ministry of mercy to a ruined world,—this spirit I say, is kindled, only from above. It is the spirit of God and the temper of heaven ; and none but those who have learned in the school of Christ—who own him as their Lord and Master, and drink into his spirit, have ever been known to exercise it. Remember then if you will not choose wisdom's ways ; if you will not be a disciple of the Divine Redeemer, and seek mercy of the Lord to be faithful, then you will not only perform all your works under the influence of wrong motives, but a large class of most important duties—duties to Christ and his cause, you will entirely neglect. You cannot therefore in any just sense, be regarded as a co-worker with God : you cannot serve your generation according to his will ; and whatever may be your efforts in certain departments of honourable enterprize, there are yet other and higher depart-

ments, where your influence can never be felt. Must not the guilt of unfaithfulness and unprofitableness then, rest upon you, and cleave to you in all your ways? Will it not darken your path through life, confront you at death, condemn you at the judgment, and follow you through eternity?

If then brethren, you would save yourselves from self-reproach; if you would obtain grace to be faithful, and enjoy the satisfaction arising from a consciousness of serving your generation according to the will of God, you must receive *Christ as your teacher and pattern*: his religion must be your chosen portion; and its high and holy motives must purify your heart and inspire and control your conduct. You are now in the midst of life, and perhaps careful and troubled about many things, eagerly grasping after earthly objects, and ardently pursuing transitory pleasures: But you are in a world of probation, you are daily acting for the Judgment and for eternity, and what can be so important to you as that which shall dispose and enable you to be *faithful*? This is, as you have seen, the tendency of religion. It is then the principal thing; it is the *supreme good*; and whatever else you seek, seek religion—get heavenly wisdom, and with all thy gettings, get understanding: for the mer-

chandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

Hitherto, I have confined my argument for religion, as man's *supreme good*, chiefly to its bearing upon the present life. I have supposed you to form your estimate of it, without calculating its power to redeem from *the wrath to come*, and without taking into view its great and precious promises of future blessedness. My endeavor has been to show you, that it is the grand remedy for the maladies of the soul; that it is the only satisfying portion—the only source of real happiness which is given to man upon earth; that the tenure by which its blessings are secured is not frail and uncertain like that by which all earthly good is held, but sure and unfailing. Its claims have been further urged, with reference to its value as a safeguard against temptation and the seductions of vice; and finally it has been commended to your regard, on account of the powerful incentives to duty which it brings to bear upon the mind—inspiring it with exalted purposes of benevolence, and prompting to self-denying efforts—to works of faith and labours of love. By these considerations I have endeavored to illustrate what the Scriptures most unequivocally declare, whether

men will believe the declaration or not, that religion is *the best portion*, even in the present life. It has been my aim to appeal to the sober judgment and enlightened conscience of every individual whom I address upon this point. But however valid or convincing the arguments already adduced may be, I should do injustice to that glorious cause which I am permitted to plead, were I to rest it here. There are, my brethren, higher, more weighty and affecting motives, which urge you to the cultivation of personal piety, than any which terminate in this temporary existence. Although it is true—everlastingly true, and worthy to be known, that religion has the promise of the life that now is, yet it is equally true that its grand excellency lies in this, that it is *the only means* of securing immortal blessedness in the life to come. Though heavenly wisdom is the principal thing in reference to the present scene of trial, yet how much more so, with respect to a future state of retribution. The royal author of our text, seems in another passage to allude to this: For wisdom saith he, is a defence, and money is a defence, (that is against many of the evils of man's present condition,) but he adds, 'the excellency of wisdom is, that it giveth *life* to them that have it.' Now this is what neither worldly wis-

dom, nor any other worldly good can accomplish ; it cannot impart *life* to them that have it. This is the high prerogative and the peculiar glory of that wisdom that is from above. It teaches its possessor to know Jehovah the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent—*whom to know aright is life eternal*.

Brethren, do any of you doubt the necessity of piety—personal, *experimental piety*, in order to secure the favor of God, and ensure a happy immortality beyond the grave? You cannot doubt on this point without striking at the very foundations of all religion, whether natural or revealed. On a point of such infinite moment ought you not to listen to the counsels of the Bible? Except a man be born again, *born of the spirit*, he cannot see the kingdom of God—without *holiness* no man shall see the Lord—without *faith* it is impossible to please God ; and the same authority that declares this, declares also, that all men have not faith. What have you to oppose to these plain declarations of Jehovah? Is it enough to look around you, and fasten your eye upon this or that individual, who claims to have undergone that great moral change which religion implies, but who nevertheless appears to you unaltered, and not what he professes to be? Is this a satisfactory

method of making void the truth of God, and the obvious requirements of his word? The Jews who stood around the cross of Christ, could object to his divine mission, and to the obligation of faith in him, or in other words to the reality of his religion, and the necessity of a personal interest in it, on precisely the same grounds. To the Saviour's solemn declarations, and to the urgent demands of his Gospel, they might have opposed the misconduct of his disciples, and especially the covetousness, hypocrisy and treachery of Judas. Doubtless they did so: and this is the very ground upon which multitudes are now justifying their unbelief, and rejecting all the offers, and all the claims of dying love? Religion is nothing with them, because it has its counterfeits. If within the circle of their acquaintance, they can find those, who, like Judas, are betraying the Saviour with a kiss, they take occasion from *their* treachery—*themselves* to *deny* him—‘to crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame.’ Hearer, will you number yourself with such? If so, you will deceive and ruin your soul; but you can do nothing more. You may reject Christ: you may refuse to embrace him, or his religion; but you cannot wrest from him his sceptre; you cannot make void the truth of his Gospel, or evade its

everlasting claims upon your love and your obedience. It will still remain true, that you must repent or perish ; and that without that holiness, of which faith in Christ is an *essential* ingredient, you can never see and enjoy God.

Who then can estimate the value of religion, or calculate the folly of delaying even for a day to secure an interest in its unspeakable blessings ?

‘ ‘Tis madness to defer.’

If the question were between religion and the world, merely with reference to the present life, you might say, that this life was so brief—so like the vapor that appeareth for a little season and then vanisheth away, that it was hardly worth your while to institute a comparison, and weigh their respective merits. But does this language become you when your *eternity* is at stake ? Is it worthy of you as an intelligent and immortal being to refuse to reflect, and to act wisely in view of *the whole extent* of that boundless existence that lies before you ?

Hearer, if you have not chosen God and religion as your best portion, you *have* chosen, and you are now pursuing the world as your *supreme good*. You do not subordinate it to higher interests, but it occupies the first place in your affections ; and the things of your everlasting peace,

are of course, virtually excluded. To all practical purposes, they are, as though they were not ; as though they had no existence. Is this wise ? Is it right ? Is it *safe* ? In matters of business you are accustomed to sober calculation. You can accurately estimate the value of different secular interests, and choose out the safest deposits, and the most productive investments ; and with respect to these things, you act with deliberation, with wisdom and foresight. As one capable of all this, God proposes to you a serious question—a question too, of immediate personal interest ? What shall it profit a man if he shall gain *the whole world, and lose his own soul* ; or what shall a man *give in exchange for his soul* ? Now this is not only a question of vast moment, but one also, that demands your immediate attention. There is no other, which has equal claims to your *present* consideration. Nor would it be safe to determine it without serious reflection. You cannot make a wise decision, until you have deliberately computed the value of the world, and weighed it against the value of your soul. And remember it is a practical concern. Your decision will *certainly* and *immediately* influence your conduct. Nay you are now acting upon a judgment, already formed ; but it is an erroneous judgment, formed

without due deliberation, contrary to the word of God, and to the unbiassed dictates of your conscience, and it is leading you rapidly down the broad way to death. Permit me then to press the duty of consideration. I urge you as you love life and desire salvation,—I beseech you by all that is grand and momentous in everlasting realities; by all that is fearful in the wrath, or desirable in the favor of God, to take up this great question anew. Consider that it is not proposed by a fellow mortal, but comes from *the throne of the Eternal*. It is not addressed to others, but to *yourself*. It is not for to-morrow, but for *to-day*; and the consequences of your decision are not for time, but for *eternity*. Again then, suffer the question to come home—what shall it profit me, if complete success crown all my worldly schemes and efforts—what shall it profit me if I gain *the whole world, and lose my own soul*; or what shall I give in exchange for my soul?

Bear with me, my respected friends. If I have pressed this point, and been urgent with you, it has not been without reason, or beyond reason. If I have set life and death before you, and solicited your immediate consideration, and your deliberate choice—for what purpose is it, but that you might choose life and live, and reign with

Christ forever and ever. I know well your spiritual dangers: they are many. You are in the midst of the world—surrounded by its temptations, harrassed by its perplexities and cumbered,—it may be *surfeited* with its cares. If you are not yet christians in deed and in truth, the most favorable season for securing your highest—your eternal interests, has already gone by. But if you do not abandon the very idea of ever securing these interests, let me counsel you to delay attention to them no longer.

Middle life, ah, how soon will its fleeting years, its sabbaths, its privileges and mercies, be past, even if God should not weaken your strength in the way, and cut you off in the midst of your days. And then old age, with its frosted locks, and palsied limbs, and wavering purposes—and may I not add, its *unchanging moral character*, will come upon you—a season that God never gave man to *live in*, but to *die in*. May the strength of your days be so spent, that if that period should, with respect to you, ever arrive, it may not come unwelcomely? What thine hand *now* findeth to do for God, for thine own soul, and for the best good of thy fellow men, that do with thy might,—remembering that there is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.

I close these Discourses, by renewedly expressing my grateful sense of the serious attention with which they have been heard; and as I invoke upon them the divine blessing, so also I commend you to God, praying *that he would make you perfect to do his will, and at last present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.*

APPENDIX.



Extracts from the Lecture (the 5th Lecture as delivered) on ‘the duties of the middle aged as members of Civil Society’—referred to in the advertisement.

“ It is to be feared, that among the mass of our citizens, low and inadequate views are entertained, of the dignity and importance of their duties, as freemen, as persons enjoying not only the privilege of the elective franchise, but having besides this, an important general influence to exert upon the publick mind, in relation to the choice of our civil rulers. This two fold agency, every citizen may exert; but in doing so, he ought to bear in mind the high responsibilities under which he acts. He ought to know and remember, that interests of unspeakable value are entrusted to his care, for the preservation of which, so far as his influence is concerned, he must be held accountable.

If you would form a just estimate of the magnitude of these interests, consider the numberless blessings and the immense amount of happiness, which our present constitution of civil government is diffusing throughout this widely extended, and highly favored land. How effectually it protects, and how kindly it fosters all our best institutions, and dearest interests. How perfectly it secures to every citizen, private property, personal liberty, and the unrestrained exercise of all his intellectual and moral powers. What liberal encouragement does it moreover afford to every individual, to labor for the promotion of personal and public improvement, for private and social happiness. Under such a government, it may be truly affirmed of law, that 'her seat is the bosom of the people, and her voice the harmony of society. All men in every station do her reverence ; the very least as feeling her care ; and the very greatest as not exempted from her power : And though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.'

Nor is this all: It is not mere declamation when we say, that this free representative government is the grand rallying point of the friends of liberty throughout the world. Our example

is casting a broad and cheering light upon the nations. It is, in various ways, operating with immense moral power upon every civilized people on the globe ; and seems destined, by the divine blessing, to become one of the chief instruments of enlightening a benighted, and disenfranchising an enslaved world. But who needs to be informed, that the very existence of this government, and the preservation of all its varied blessings depend, under God, on the intelligent and honest exercise of that agency, which every freeman is called on to exert ? That freeman then, who ignorantly or inconsiderately approaches the polls ; or who appears there, under the impulse of some low, personal, or party consideration, rather than with an eye single to the true interest and glory of his country, acts most wickedly. He shews himself unworthy of the privileges which he enjoys : for he does what in him lies, to corrupt that pure fountain from which unnumbered civil and social blessings are daily flowing through our land ; and from which also, we humbly hope in God, that streams inferior in value only to those of the waters of life, shall yet go forth far and wide, to bless the nations. Am I not right then, in asserting that the exercise of the elective franchise, and every other

influence which the freeman exerts in the choice of our civil rulers, is attended with high and weighty responsibilities ?

But in addition to these suggestions, every freeman ought to consider the solemnities with which the law has clothed his duties. In this, (and I believe in most of the States,) it has bound him by an oath, to act *truly and faithfully*. He has sworn, ‘that whenever he is called on to give his suffrage, touching any matter that concerns either his own State, or the United States, he will give it as he judges will be most conducive to the best good of the same, without *respect of persons or favor of any man*.’ How extensive and sacred are the obligations here imposed ; and yet how little felt and how widely and awfully disregarded ! I appeal to those who have been in the habit of watching the movements of political men, or who have stood around the polls, and observed the temper with which multitudes have exercised this most important of all civil rights—the *right of suffrage*, to you I appeal, to say, whether there is not, to a melancholy extent, every symptom of entire forgetfulness, if not of direct disregard of the obligations of this oath. A large proportion of those who testify in our courts of justice under the sanction of an oath,

appear to be more or less affected by the responsibilities they have laid themselves under. But it has been often noticed, that the *freeman's oath* though equally sacred in its obligations, and imposing, (in the eye of God whether it be so in the eye of man or not,) equal guilt upon the violator, seemed to be far less regarded ; insomuch that many good men have thought that its administration was a public evil,—supposing that sanctions so fearful, and yet so inefficacious ; and so often incurred, must be productive of more injury to the morals and to the souls of men, than they could be of good to the cause of civil liberty.

Such then, are the obligations under which you are acting my hearers, as freemen, and as members of this civil community. They are worthy to be most seriously pondered at all times, and especially on those occasions, when you are called to the immediate discharge of your highest civil trusts."

" *Again.*—As members of society, you have all, important duties to discharge, touching *the cause of publick morals*. There is a responsibility resting upon each individual, in this respect, that cannot be thrown off, however the sense of it may be stifled. I know it is easy to divide this responsibility, and to say, I am but one

among many, and what can I do? What will my example and my efforts avail? But this method of quieting conscience under the neglect of personal duty, though often resorted to, (even by those of whom we have a right to expect better things,) will never meet the divine approbation. It may subserve the low purposes of self interest or self indulgence, but it is unworthy of an upright and generous mind. What did such a principle of action, ever accomplish for the good of man? Howard might have said, there are immense evils in the state of the public prisons, and they ought to be remedied, but I am only one among many, upon whom the responsibility rests; and besides, what can *I do alone*? The horrors of the prisons and dungeons of Europe must therefore remain unmitigated. Wilberforce might have said, awful are the evils and miseries of the slave trade, but the mass of the community are insensible to these miseries, and quietly acquiesce in them: I am almost alone in feeling their magnitude, and what can *I do*? He would have had but to say this, and to act accordingly, and this commerce in blood might at this instant have existed in every quarter of the civilized world, and in all its most horrid forms. We may take this ground also, in regard to all the sources of moral pollution and

contagion which are pouring their desolating influences upon us ; and we shall have the satisfaction at our latter end, of feeling that we have evaded our duty, resisted obligation, and lived to no valuable or praiseworthy end. With whatever favor, such temporising characters may be regarded, while living, yet when their course is finished, their names are forgotten. None rise up after them, to bless their memories, or to behold and rejoice in the fruits of their labours for the public good. No man knows how much he can accomplish for the preservation, or the reformation of the public morals, till he has faithfully and perseveringly used his efforts and influence. If it be true, that as individuals, we can accomplish but little, compared with what needs to be accomplished, yet by associating our influence with that of the friends of good order and good morals, we may do much. One of the most efficient methods of promoting the cause of morality, is that of affording a steady and generous support to all the institutions of religion. The Father of his country, in his farewell address to the people of these States, while urging the necessity of maintaining general morality, in order to perpetuate our civil institutions, observes, that ' it is more than questionable whether a healthy

tone of morals can be sustained in any community, without the aids of religion.' The whole history of our race testifies to the soundness of this sentiment. What must we think then of the man, who tramples upon, and treats with neglect, those divine institutions, upon which, not only the prosperity, but the very existence of religion depends. To say nothing of those who profess to be *christians*, even those who would be thought *good members of society*—lovers of their country, and friends to her civil institutions, are bound by every consideration, to support and advance the cause of virtue and true piety. They ought to promote the circulation of the Scriptures, and sustain and encourage those who are employed in enforcing their doctrines. They ought to feel a deep concern in the cause of Sabbath Schools—those powerful auxiliaries of every valuable interest, whether of education, of liberty or religion. They ought to rally around the Holy Sabbath, enforce its sanctity, and shield it from its present increasing and fearful profanation. They ought religiously to consecrate it to the great purposes of its institution—to the duties of private and public worship—to the devout acknowledgment of the divine goodness—to the reading and hearing of God's most holy word; to the setting forth of his most

worthy praise—to humble confessions of sin, and fervent petitions for those things which are requisite as well for the body as the soul.

These are duties which belong to you my hearers, not merely as devout *christians*, but as consistent *patriots*, as good citizens, and firm supporters of all the great interests of the community. No man can pursue an opposite course, without sundering those ties, which ought to bind him alike to God, and to his country. However much he may boast of his attachment to our civil institutions, he is doing that, which has a most powerful tendency to undermine the very foundations upon which all these institutions repose: and if he will, from whatever unworthy motives, persevere in the neglect of duty, the curse of unfaithfulness will be the sad—perhaps the only inheritance, which he will bequeathe to his children.”

I will close my observations upon this point, by quoting the eloquent remarks of a distinguished jurist and magistrate of our own land,—who in one of his charges, thus expresses himself.

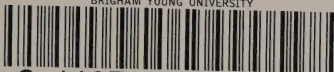
“ The true notion of patriotism, is a principle of obedience to the laws of God, and of our country—manifesting itself in the discharge of our religious, moral and social duties. This is substan-

tial patriotism—within the reach of every man, high and low, rich and poor. The only real source of danger to our country, arises from the people themselves. Vain and worse than vain, are laws for the preservation of government, if the people are too debauched and corrupt to execute them. Let us then in our several stations, encourage virtue and discourage vice; and especially let those who occupy stations of *authority and influence*, exert themselves to the utmost to promote the cause of good morals. *Above all things let the principles of christianity be cherished, and its religious institutions fostered, by every man who wishes well to his country.* A government like ours, floating on the precarious tide of publick opinion, can be held securely by nothing else but the principles of religion; and if it be once driven from this anchor, by the storms of irreligion and licentiousness, it will be quickly overwhelmed in the waves of popular violence and commotion.”*

*Rush's Charges.

ERRATUM.

In a part of the edition, at the 87th page and 9th line from the top, instead of ‘a God of *mercy*’, read—a God of *means*.



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